

ECO-SMART DEVELOPMENT:  
An Economic Concept  
for the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ) and  
Elsewhere in Sarasota County

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Florida legislature established the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ) program to encourage green economic development. A set of State economic incentives were envisioned to be part of the EEZ program, but these have yet to be adopted.

The Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) selected Sarasota County's proposal as one of two EEZs in the State. Sarasota County's current EEZ is in two parts – the Central County Landfill property east of I-75 and, west of I-75, 3 contiguous properties that include the land owned by two different private developers, and land owned by the County.

As required by the Florida EEZ legislation, the Sarasota County Department of Planning and Development Services has drafted a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, addressing the physical planning requirements for the EEZ and presented it to DCA and the County Commission, but it has not yet been adopted.

Sarasota County contracted with Global Urban Development (GUD) to draft the Economic Concept Paper for the EEZ that follows.

The EEZ is one aspect of Sarasota County's efforts to diversify its economic development strategy from a largely real estate oriented strategy to a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy that also focuses on encouraging initiation, expansion, and attraction of Clean Tech and Green Businesses. The goal of this strategy is to advance Sarasota County as a Center for Innovation in Energy and Sustainability. In this process of economic development diversification, Sarasota County is very clear that it wants to preserve and enhance the environmental amenities and quality of life that make the County so attractive.

GUD is proposing Eco-Smart Development – a strategy that integrates a wide variety of Sustainable Economic Development best practices and utilizes LEED certification – as the guiding economic concept for the EEZ and elsewhere in Sarasota County.

There are five basic types of Eco-Smart Development: Eco-Smart Villages; Eco-Smart Town Centers; Green Energy Parks; Green Business Parks; and Green Shopping Centers. These types of Eco-Smart Development can be implemented separately or in combination, depending on the size and other characteristics of the development site.

The concept of Eco-Smart Development can provide guidance and direction as Sarasota County undertakes an integrated planning process for revising its Comprehensive Plan and formulating a new Sustainability Plan.

The EEZ as currently conceived will have a long (as much as 10 year) time horizon due to current economic conditions and also due to the time it takes to complete a real estate development. Therefore the GUD recommendations include ways to modify the current approach in order to obtain more rapid economic benefits.

In this Economic Concept Paper, GUD is making nine recommendations.

1. Establish a Green Energy Park – a center for green energy production providing clean energy at a discount to businesses and residences in the EEZ – and a “waste to wealth” Resource Recovery Park at the Central Landfill site.
2. Develop an Eco-Smart Village, and/or a Green Shopping Center, and/or a Green Business Park or some combination at the SDC Communities site in the EEZ.
3. Develop an Eco-Smart Town Center, a set of Eco-Smart Villages, and a Green Business Park at the Palmer Ranch site in the EEZ or at some other location.
4. To increase the Clean Tech and Green Business development and the Green employment potential of the EEZ and to establish a shorter time horizon for project impact, explore expanding the EEZ boundaries to include an existing business park that can be transformed into a Green Business Park.
5. Establish a comprehensive set of regional and statewide green real estate incentives and Clean Tech and Green Business incentives.
6. Undertake a Clean Tech and Green Business initiation, expansion, and attraction strategy for the EEZ.
7. Constitute a multi-modal transportation system for the EEZ, featuring walking, biking, electric vehicles, and efficient transportation infrastructure.
8. Emphasize open space and environmental amenities in the EEZ, as well as establishing standards for Low Impact Development.
9. Formulate and implement an aggressive communications and marketing strategy for the EEZ as an aspect of a Countywide Sustainable Economic Development Communications Initiative.

While market dynamics outside of the control of Sarasota County government will influence its success, a successful EEZ can play an important role in diversifying Sarasota County’s economic development strategy and enhancing economic prosperity while also maintaining and improving the environment and quality of life.

## PART ONE: CONTEXT

### Establishment of the EEZ

The EEZ program was established in 2009 through legislation by Florida State Legislature which called for the Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to select at least one local governmental entity interested in:

- Developing and implementing strategies for energy-efficient land-use patterns.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Cultivating green economic development.
- Encouraging the generation of renewable electric energy.
- Promotion of manufacturing to create green products and jobs.

The legislation calls for the EEZ to integrate mixed-use and transportation facilities with the local government's land-use and development patterns to:

- Reduce reliance on automobiles as a form of transportation.
- Encourage certified green building developments and renewable energy systems.
- Encourage the creation of green jobs.
- Demonstrate how local financial and regulatory incentives would be used.

The EEZ was originally intended as a kind of green Enterprise Zone. Enterprise Zones usually include tax, land cost, development bond, and other incentives that are limited to the Zone. However, during the legislative process the EEZ did not have any incentives approved. There is currently an effort in the Florida legislature to establish these incentives. DCA selected a proposal from Sarasota County as one of two pilots in the State. (See Appendix A for a description of the EEZ site.)

Since the selection of its proposal, Sarasota County has established a connection between the EEZ and a U.S. Department of Energy grant to assist Sarasota County to become a "Center for Innovation in Energy and Sustainability" and contracted with Global Urban Development (GUD) to assist the County.

GUD has evolved a coherent methodology to assist places to develop Sustainable Economic Development Strategies. GUD applied its methodology in Sarasota County, interviewing more than 60 business and civic leaders, and produced a unique Sustainable Economic Development Strategy for Sarasota County that leverages the region's environmental and sustainability heritage as a vehicle for economic prosperity.

That Strategy is described in the GUD report *Prosperity in Paradise: Growing the Sarasota County Sustainable Economy*. The report includes seven recommendations.

No.	Recommendation	Goal
1	<i>Initiate a Business Development Network</i>	Create a regional Business Development Network to support the attraction, establishment, and growth of entrepreneurial enterprises.
2	<i>Expand the Green Business Partnership</i>	Expand Sarasota County’s Green Business Partnership so that Sarasota County has the highest per capita number of certified Green Businesses of any county in the nation.
3	<i>Establish a Clean Technology Support Infrastructure</i>	Develop a support network to expand the number of Clean Technology companies that locate and grow in Sarasota County.
4	<i>Launch a Green Energy and Resource Recovery Park</i>	Establish a Green Energy and Resource Recovery Park at the Sarasota County Central Landfill.
5	<i>Encourage Eco-Smart Development</i>	Support Eco-Smart Development in the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ) and elsewhere in the County.
6	<i>Organize a Green Talent Response System</i>	Align the County talent supply chain to have the capacity to respond effectively to increases in demand for “green” skills.
7	<i>Formulate a Communications Strategy</i>	Develop and communicate a brand identity for the Sarasota County region that differentiates the region as an attractive location for entrepreneurs with an ethic of Sustainability.

## Economic Development in Sarasota County

In the interviews conducted by the GUD team, one leader in Sarasota County, when asked about the County’s economic development strategy, replied that it was very simple. “Promote tourism so that people will come to Sarasota County and be so attracted to the environment and the lifestyle that they buy a second home here and to like their second home so much that they retire here.”

Because this economic development strategy depended on maintaining the quality of the environment and the lifestyle in Sarasota County, it was possible to work out a fundamental (if sometimes contentious) agreement between the developers and the construction industry on the one side and the environmentalists and neighborhood preservationist on the other side – that development in Sarasota County would preserve and protect the environment. Sarasota became known in Florida and, to a certain extent, nationally as a green county, with a deep commitment to sustainability.

Sarasota County’s real estate based economic development strategy worked very well until the real estate bubble burst. When that happened, Sarasota County and the Southwest Florida region suffered an even more serious foreclosure crisis and recession than much of the rest of the country.

Fortunately, the Sarasota County government and the City governments in the County used the economic surplus generated in the boom times wisely, establishing a variety of “rainy day funds,” so that the County and Cities have not suffered the economic meltdowns that many counties and cities, less hard hit by the recession, have suffered.

However, Sarasota County has clearly recognized that it needs to diversify its economic development strategy. This recognition, among other reasons, led the Economic Development Corporation to work with stakeholders throughout the County to produce the new *Five Year Economic Development Strategic Plan*. This Plan is seeking to produce 15,000 new jobs and 2,500 new businesses in the County by focusing on five “platforms” where Sarasota County has strengths:

- Existing businesses.
- Aging.
- Sustainable systems.
- Design.
- Innovations and entrepreneurs.

In all of the GUD interviews a consensus emerged that Sarasota County’s strategic advantage was the quality of its environment and its way of life. Without exception, all of the CEO’s interviewed said that their companies were located in Sarasota County for this reason. This makes sense, because Sarasota County doesn’t have the strategic advantages of many other locations, such as presence of a major research university or location at a major transportation hub. Yet there is significant entrepreneurial energy engaged in the County – on a par with regions with more traditional strategic advantages.

Therefore, it makes sense for Sarasota County to ground its efforts at economic diversification in its commitment to preserving its environment and enhancing its quality of life.

That is why Sarasota County contracted with the GUD team, because Global Urban Development is a world leader in designing “Sustainable Economic Development Strategies.”

In its Sustainable Economic Development Strategy work, GUD now makes a distinction between three kinds of sustainability:

- *Sustainability 1.0* focuses on environmental protection to reduce pollution and waste, while encouraging preservation of nature and open space. Sustainability 1.0 sees a conflict between environmental protection and economic development and seeks an appropriate compromise with mutually acceptable trade-offs.
- *Sustainability 2.0* focuses on climate action through climate action plans that begin by comparing a place's current carbon footprint with its desired carbon footprint and then move on to formulate a set of actions that are designed to take that place from its current carbon footprint to its desired carbon footprint. These actions are typically largely regulation-based.
- *Sustainability 3.0* focuses on Sustainable Economic Development which recognizes that a green market is emerging. Sustainable Economic Development policies and programs are specifically designed to guide the market in general and individual Clean Tech/Green businesses, sustainable real estate developments, and green investments in particular. The market becomes an ally producing economic prosperity and environmental quality at the same time. Places and companies become richer by becoming greener.

The Sarasota County leaders interviewed by GUD found this formulation helpful in understanding Sarasota County's situation. Sarasota County has been a leader in Sustainability 1.0 and has not been a leader in the currently fashionable Sustainability 2.0. Now Sarasota County wants to jump to Sustainability 3.0 and take its place again as a leader in the most sophisticated form of sustainability.

## PART TWO: THE CONCEPT – ECO-SMART DEVELOPMENT

### The Elements of Eco-Smart Development

The EEZ can be a flagship for Sarasota County in embracing Sustainability 3.0, but to do that it needs a guiding concept. The role of this paper is to propose that concept.

The EEZ legislation requires that each EEZ jurisdiction adopt an amendment to that jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan. The Sarasota County Department of Planning and Development Services has drafted a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, addressing the physical planning requirements for the EEZ and presented it to DCA and the County Commission, but it has not been adopted.



Sarasota County's proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the EEZ focuses on three types of policies:

1. Greenhouse gas reduction policies that promote green economic development, encourage renewable energy generation, promote energy conservation strategies, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Multi-modal transportation policies whereby streets are designed to accommodate multiple modes of transportation comfortably, including pedestrians and bicycles, as well as public transportation and private vehicles powered by electricity and biofuels.
3. Low-impact development policies that feature retention of native vegetation, soils, rainwater harvesting, pervious pavement, and bio-retention.

Building on this foundation, GUD is proposing "Eco-Smart Development" as the unifying and guiding concept for the EEZ. The concept of Eco-Smart Development integrates the three types of policies in the proposed EEZ Comprehensive Plan Amendment, along with a set of other important perspectives.

Eco-Smart Development is a concept formulated by GUD for the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council to describe a particular type of development emerging in Southwest Florida, such as Babcock Ranch. However, the concept can be applied much more broadly.

In addition to greenhouse gas reduction, multi-modal transportation, and low-impact development, Eco-Smart Development combines the best of:

- Ecological preservation and restoration, featuring environmental preservation zones, greenways, parks, lakes, and other environmental amenities.
- Smart development addressing complete utilization of information technology (IT), broadband, and telecommunications to produce smart infrastructure, including smart buildings connected to a smart grid, able to withstand winds of up to 120 mph.
- Green energy generation, featuring solar photovoltaic (PV), solar thermal, wind, geothermal, and biomass.
- Resource-efficient (zero-waste) development that conserves energy and material resources reducing all forms of waste to the minimum or eliminating waste altogether.
- Sustainable Business Development that promotes Clean Tech Businesses and Green Businesses.
- Livable community development that involves form-based zoning and codes, among other strategies to generate human scale neighborhoods that are mixed-use, walkable, and productive of a high quality of life.
- Bio-regional development connecting local organic agriculture with urban consumption.

There are good reasons for incorporating each of these perspectives in a development, but, taken together, they are different aspects of a new kind of development that works for:

- The developer(s).
- The people living and working in the development, near it, and throughout the region.
- The regional economy.
- The natural environment.
- The marketability and profitability of the development.

There are synergies when the different perspectives are utilized together.

### The Types of Eco-Smart Development

As conceived by GUD, there are five basic types of Eco-Smart Development that are relevant to the EEZ and Sarasota County.

*Eco-Smart Villages:* mixed-use neighborhoods that are human-scale, walkable, and combine residential with neighborhood-serving retail and commercial.

*Eco-Smart Town Centers:* neighborhoods that combine government and civic uses with recreation, lifestyle, culture, arts, education, entertainment, and lodging uses.

*Green Energy Parks:* industrial areas combining installation of the appropriate array of Green Energy technologies, including:

- Solar photovoltaic (PV).
- Solar thermal.
- Wind.
- Geothermal.
- Biomass and biofuels.
- Emission-free waste to energy.

In a national study by Navigant Consulting, Florida was identified as among the states with the greatest growth potential for solar PV, biomass and waste-to-energy.

*Green Business Parks:* larger scale employment centers that combine light industrial, manufacturing, and office uses for Clean Tech and Green Businesses, linked by multi-modal transportation, with significant environmental amenities.

*Green Shopping Centers:* larger scale employment centers that combine regional destination retail and commercial uses that are also linked by multi-modal transportation, with significant environmental amenities.

An EEZ development site can include one, two, three, or four of these types of Eco-Smart Development, depending on the size, location, and zoning of the site. However, according to the economic concept that GUD is proposing, all of the sites will exhibit the characteristics of Eco-Smart Development (i.e. development that features ecological preservation; smart low-impact development; multimodal transportation; green energy and resource efficiency; with a bio-regional orientation).

To accomplish this type of development there needs to be some form of evaluation and certification.

### LEED Certification

Private property development within the EEZ needs to implement a high standard of green development. As the EEZ legislation indicates, the EEZ should “encourage certified green building developments and renewable energy systems.”

To establish standards and certification for the Eco-Smart Development proposed for the EEZ, GUD is recommending the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, although certification according to standards established by the Florida Green Building Coalition is an alternative to LEED.

GUD is recommending LEED since these standards have become commonplace in the United States. By choosing existing standards the certification is not the responsibility of the County, yet reduction in energy use and sustainability levels can be achieved. The standards have been modified and expanded as they have become more universally used and perfected.

As a minimum, any new development as a whole that receives EEZ incentives should meet LEED-ND standards and the buildings should meet LEED BD+C standards. The LEED certification and sustainability efforts fall into several areas. The different types of LEED certification include:

- LEED BD+C: Building Design and Construction.
- LEED O+M: Operations and Maintenance.
- LEED ID+C: Interior Design and Construction.
- LEED ND: Neighborhood Development.
- LEED HOMES: Green, affordable housing.
- LEED REGREEN: Remodeling Projects.

Information on LEED standards is readily available through the Myakka River Branch of the Florida Gulf Coast Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council and also on the website of the national U.S. Green Building Council ([www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)).

The properties should also include adequate landscaping with significant tree cover both as an environmental amenity and also as an aspect of low-impact development. The landscaping and tree requirements should apply to any commercial and retail development as well as residential and mixed-use development. Trees and vegetation near roads are effective in removing some of the greenhouse causing gases.

Developing LEED projects demonstrates leadership in green development and provides opportunity for new jobs in construction, for LEED certified inspectors and consultants, and attracts companies that supply the various components of sustainable development. The Myakka River Branch of the U.S. Green Building Council is highly effective and Sarasota County has a strong representation of LEED certified architects and builders.

Studies at the University of California reviewed 10,000 LEED, Star Compliance, and smart control buildings and found that these types of buildings rented for more money and sold for more money than conventionally built buildings. Other studies found that there was a wide variance in the extra cost of LEED compliance partially due to the level of LEED attained (four levels from Bronze to Platinum) and partially on how well additional improvements were controlled. The added cost varied from 0% to 8% with most reasonable levels of sustainable design in the 2% to 6% cost increase range.

The actual return on investment for many buildings can be somewhat difficult to ascertain because of the large variety of buildings. However, some individual buildings have been analyzed, for example, Rocky Mountain Institute offers the case of the Toyota Motor Sales South Campus Office Development in Torrance, CA which was certified LEED Gold. That building achieved \$400,000 in annual energy savings, used 94% less potable water, and 95% of construction waste was diverted from landfill. Toyota required that new construction demonstrate a level of 10% return on the added investment. This building was exceeding that 10% requirement at the time of the report. If carefully designed and built, LEED certification often more than pays for itself in reduced costs.

Eco-Smart Development, using LEED standards, establishes what amounts to a set of design parameters within which to generate more successful and more profitable real estate and businesses development.

## The Economic Case for Eco-Smart Development

There is a strong economic case that the set of design parameters established by Eco-Smart Development will actually lead to more profitable real estate and businesses development.

Undertaking Eco-Smart Development is based on the premise that a sustainability revolution is taking place – from an old economy that is high pollution, waste intensive, high carbon, and ecologically disruptive, to a new (green) economy that is low pollution, energy/resource efficient, low carbon, and ecologically supportive.

Businesses, cities, communities, and regions that lead this revolution will tend to prosper, because, over the long run, the new green economy will tend to outperform the old one. Businesses, cities, communities, and regions that lag are in danger of being left behind.

Our time is somewhat analogous to 100 years ago when the automobile industry emerged and everything changed – the way cities and regions grew; the way transportation took place; which industries succeeded and which failed. In the 1920s, the Detroit metropolitan area became a world headquarters of the automobile industry, and one of the fastest growing and most prosperous cities and regions in the world.

This time is also somewhat analogous to the IT revolution 20 years ago when a complex of related technologies – the personal computer, the cell phone, and the internet – emerged and everything changed again, with the Silicon Valley/San Francisco Bay Area becoming the IT world leader and one of the most advanced economic regions in the world.

This time it is the Clean Tech industries – energy conservation, green energy generation, resource efficiency, pollution prevention, waste minimization, and recycling – that are the engines of transformation, and all businesses are coming to use their products and services.

A new way of doing business is emerging out of this transformation – Green Business – and, before long, the way all businesses operate will completely change. As Green Businesses emerge and interact with each other as suppliers and customers, and as they all become greener, a Green Economy is developing.

## Examples of the Green Economy

The Green Economy is more than just a theoretical proposition. Recognizing the economic opportunities inherent in going green, many leading larger corporations are taking significant actions. For example:

- According to its Sustainability Progress Report, Wal-Mart has committed to an environmental responsibility program, aiming to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2012, while targeting 100% renewable energy, zero waste, and the sale of sustainable products. Wal-Mart has invested \$500 million in sustainability, increased building and fleet efficiency by 15%; built a set of experimental green stores; and is requiring its suppliers to go green through its Sustainable Value Networks.
- In its 2007 report, GE indicated that its Ecomagination Initiative now has 60 products generating \$70 billion in revenue, with overall corporate greenhouse gases reduced by 8% from 2004 levels.
- In its case study on DuPont, the Climate Group reports that DuPont saved \$3 billion while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 72% over a decade. DuPont is aggressively developing sustainable products for buildings and construction, transportation, agriculture and nutrition, and communication. DuPont reports on its social and environmental progress using the Global Reporting Initiative reporting format and is independently monitored by Environmental Resource Management.
- In its Sustainability Report, Interface, Inc., the world's largest manufacturer of commercial and residential modular carpet and broadloom, shows that it has grown \$200 million (to over \$1 billion) without increasing resource consumption, and the company has avoided \$250 million in waste management bills. Now Interface President and CEO, Ray Anderson, has told the story of how Interface is doing this in his book *Confessions of a Radical Industrialist*.
- IBM's Smarter Planet Initiative is seeking to infuse intelligence into the systems and processes that make the world work – into things no one would recognize as computers: cars, appliances, roadways, power grids, clothes, even natural systems such as agriculture and waterways. Business, government, and civil society around the world are capturing the potential of smarter systems to achieve economic growth, near-term efficiency, sustainable development, and societal progress.
- The 2009 study *Doing Well by Doing Good: Green Office Buildings* issued by the University of California at Berkeley (Institute of Business and Economic Research and the Fisher Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics) reviewed 10,000 LEED, Star Compliance, and control buildings and found that sustainable buildings rented for more money and sold for more money than conventionally built buildings.
- According to the *State of Green Business 2009*, 30% of the corporations in the S&P 500 now produce a non-financial report that addresses environmental issues.

- The 2008 study, *Going Green* by Hudson Gain Corporation, found that 214 of the 1,200 largest corporations in the United States had some version of a Chief Sustainability Officer and a sustainability program oriented around achieving a “triple bottom line” of “profit, people, and planet.” These sustainability programs address how the corporations function, independent of whether they produce a specific product or service to benefit the environment.

Other major U.S. corporations with comprehensive sustainability programs include: Dell, Johnson Controls, Hewlett Packard, Johnson and Johnson, Coca Cola, H.J. Heinz, Google, Random House, Nike, Starbucks, TimeWarner, UPS, Whole Foods, Xerox, Target, Walgreens, and many others.

This national experience is mirrored by the experience of certified Green Businesses in Sarasota County that are members of the Green Business Partnership. Examples include:

- Doctors Hospital’s “Linen Conservation Initiative” saving more than 51,000kWh of electricity and more than 10,000 gallons of water, resulting in savings to the hospital of \$56,000.
- The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art undertaking a facilities improvement project to reduce electricity, natural gas, and water consumption, resulting in more than \$100,000 in annual savings.
- Mirasol FAFCO Solar cutting garbage costs 50 percent by increasing recycling and decreasing garbage services.
- Sarasota Coastal Credit Union eliminating plastic utensils and Styrofoam cups; participating in a toner cartridge recycling program; switching nearly half of the 26,000 members to electronic statements, saving 3.12 tons of paper, 53 trees, 1,186 gallons of oil, 12,480kWh of electricity, and 21,840 gallons of water.
- Venice Golf and Country Club reducing nitrogen and other containments released into the Myakka River watershed by more than 4,000 pounds per year by irrigating the property with captured stormwater and also removing invasive trees and plants and replanting 13 wetland preserves with native plants.

Eco-Smart Development in the EEZ can serve as a home for Clean Tech and Green Businesses and sustainable real estate developments producing a powerful, integrated demonstration of the Green Economy in Sarasota County.

Eco-Smart Development can symbolize Sarasota County’s commitment to environmental preservation, economic prosperity, and high quality of life, attracting exactly the type of residents and businesses that Sarasota County is seeking and contribute to the Sarasota County brand as the home of a great climate, a wonderful environment, and the marvelous Gulf Coast.

Eco-Smart Development exemplifies the optimal marriage of development and environmental preservation efforts. It can deliver on the GUD premise that, “You get richer by becoming greener.”

(For a more extensive discussion of the Green Economy in Sarasota County, see the GUD paper *Sustainable Economic Development: Industries, Markets, Jobs, and Strategies for Sarasota County*.)

## Eco-Smart Development and Regional Planning

It is GUD’s understanding that Sarasota County is launching into a three year process to produce a new Comprehensive Plan and a new Sustainability Plan and that the two planning processes and the two plans will be integrated.

In this integrated process, sustainability will not be a separate program or checklist, but rather it will be woven into all aspects of economic, environmental and community plans/activities. The successful completion of this process can, in effect, create “Sustainability 4.0.”

The County has made several key decisions already, including policies addressing:

- The Urban Service Boundary
- Multi-modal Transportation
- Low Impact design

Eco-Smart Development can take these policies further by encouraging consideration of how a proposed project or a small area plan will work at different space scales (small, medium, and large), time scales (5, 10, and 25 years), types of development (Eco-Smart Village, Green Town Center, Green Business Park), and disciplines (air, water, energy, Green construction, economic development, and open space) simultaneously. Eco-Smart Development can also provide a context for approaching the intersection of how private properties and public infrastructure produce a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.

Eco-Smart Development can be a vision that guides the new Comprehensive Plan (as integrated with the Sustainability Plan) to move beyond a purely regulatory role and become a vehicle for community consensus.



## PART THREE: SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To apply the concept of Eco-Smart Development to the EEZ in Sarasota County, GUD is making nine specific recommendations.

Recommendation 1: *Establish a Green Energy Park – a center for green energy production providing clean energy at a discount to businesses and residences in the EEZ – and a “waste to wealth” Resource Recovery Park at the Central Landfill site.*

The Sarasota County Central Solid Waste Disposal Complex (Landfill) is one centerpiece of the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ). This Landfill site, owned by the County Government, consists of more than 7,000 acres, of which 2,969 acres are inside of a protected Conservation Area. The Landfill facilities will occupy a modest portion of the entire site, leaving available nearly 4,000 acres of land that can be used for other purposes. The Landfill is zoned for government uses.

GUD is recommending two strategies for maximizing the sustainable economic development potential of the Landfill:

- Establish a Green Energy Park at the Landfill that generates green energy from a mix (as appropriate) of:
  - Solar photovoltaic (PV).
  - Solar thermal.
  - Wind.
  - Geothermal.
  - Biomass and biofuels.
  - Emission-free waste-to-energy.
  
- Develop a Resource Recovery Park on the Landfill site that locates businesses that use the Landfill waste stream as a source of raw material inputs to production.

*Green Energy Park:* A proposal to generate methane gas at the Landfill is currently under consideration. The methane gas could be, in turn, used to generate electricity or it could be piped offsite and used as a source of energy for heating, cooling, or other uses.

Another possible initiative has been initially explored that involves Sarasota County working with Florida Power & Light (FPL) to obtain regulatory approval for FPL to build a major solar energy PV production facility on the Central Landfill site, if FPL agrees to sell the solar-generated electricity at a significant discount (similar to off-peak rates, for example) to all businesses and residences located within the EEZ boundaries. This creative deal would generate a major economic location incentive for firms and households to move into and expand within the EEZ.

There are a number of other promising technologies that could also be utilized in a Green Energy Park at the Landfill, including: plant and algae biofuels, biomass energy generation from wood chips and vegetation, and a zero emission waste to energy installation. Each of these types of green energy should be made available to the businesses and residences within the EEZ boundaries at a discount.

Given that the Central Landfill site is zoned for government use, a Green Energy Park at the Landfill will either involve Sarasota County purchasing and owning or leasing the green energy technology, or companies contracting with Sarasota County to produce green energy in a way that can produce a substantial public benefit, such as reduced cost energy for the businesses and residences in the EEZ as a major incentive for locating in the EEZ.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the EEZ calls for a significant investment in transportation infrastructure in the EEZ and that investment needs to generate an appropriate return. Evolving the Central Landfill into a Green Energy Park is one way to generate that return.

GUD recommends that a feasibility assessment for a Green Energy Park at the Landfill be undertaken, which will involve:

1. Assessing the preliminary viability of various sites for energy generation.
2. Recommending potential green energy technologies for feasibility assessment for those sites.
3. Recommending a consultant to design an RFP and select companies to locate at the site.

*Resource Recovery Park:* The field of “waste to wealth” resource recovery is expanding rapidly, with new, highly effective systems and technologies being implemented. The Central Landfill site can become the home for a state of the art resource recovery system.

A Resource Recovery Park is a new development in recycling. In its broadest sense, it is the co-location of reuse, recycling, compost processing, manufacturing, and retail businesses in a central facility. The public can bring all of their waste and recoverable materials to this facility at one time.

A Resource Recovery Park may also be called an integrated resource recovery facility, serial materials recovery facility (MRF), recycling estate, industrial recycling park, recycling-based industrial park, or discard mall. A number of market forces are encouraging this type of development.

A Resource Recovery Park enables the public to:

- Reduce the amount of waste requiring payment for disposal.
- Recover some value from the sale of valuable materials in a "one-stop service center" for reuse, recycling, and composting.
- Buy other items of value from reuse, recycling, composting, and recycled-content retail stores.

A Resource Recovery Park enables the participating businesses to share:

- Space (including warehousing).
- Operating equipment (e.g. forklifts, balers, shredders, wheel loaders, and trucks).
- Preventive maintenance and repair services.
- Pollution control equipment and services.
- Facilities (e.g., maintenance yard, truck washing area, conference rooms, kitchen/break room, showers, and bathrooms).
- Management and technical expertise.
- Accounting, legal, and insurance services.
- Promotions and advertising costs.
- Government affairs and permitting services; administrative and clerical support services.
- Communications equipment and services (e.g., copiers, computers, Internet access, websites, fax machines, radios, and telephones).
- Staff recruitment and employment training services.
- Restaurant/snack bar for businesses and customers.
- Educational facilities and services (e.g., a nature trail, demonstrations of the use of different compost products in gardens and landscaping, on-site composting bins for residents and businesses, demonstrations of recycled building products in use and/or an environmental education display/museum).

GUD recommends that the County conduct a feasibility assessment for a Resource Recovery Park on its Landfill site. Implementing this recommendation will involve:

1. Assessing the availability of business development sites and utilities for the County.
2. Assessing the raw material flows coming into the Landfill.
3. Designing the incentives structure for companies that locate in the park.
4. Hiring a consultant to design an RFP and select companies for location in the park.

Recommendation 2: *Develop an Eco-Smart Village, a Green Shopping Center, and/or a Green Business Park or some combination at the SDC Communities site in the EEZ.*

Sub-planning Area 2 (located southwest of Sub-planning Area 1) consists of 220 acres, also intersected by State Route 681. It is being developed by a partnership of SDC Communities and Benderson Development.

SDC Communities and Benderson Development have not indicated the type of development they wish to pursue. However, since Benderson Development specializes in retail development, it is likely that at least a portion of the site will be used for some type of retail development.

Because Henry Rodriguez, the President and CEO of SDC Communities has been a leading proponent of the EEZ and a member of the EEZ Stakeholders group, it is reasonable to expect that any development concept SDC Communities proposes would meet the EEZ goals and objectives. In a conversation with GUD, Mr. Rodriguez championed the concept of “The Green Mile,” along State Route 681.

Either a Green Shopping Center, or an Eco-Smart Village, or a Green Business Park or some combination would work well at the SDC site.

A Green Shopping Center at the SDC site would be a larger but still human-scale employment center combining regional destination retail and commercial uses that are internally linked and linked to the surrounding region by multi-modal transportation. A Green Shopping Center could feature certified Green Businesses offering Clean Tech products and services, Green products and services, as well as the full range of other products and services, as long as they are not environmentally destructive. Such a Green Shopping Center could have strong appeal to consumers.

An Eco-Smart Village at the SDC site would be a mixed-use, walkable, human scale neighborhood combining residential with neighborhood-serving retail and commercial uses. A Green Business Park at the SDC site would be a larger scale employment center that could combine light industrial, manufacturing, and office uses and be the home for thriving Clean Tech and Green Businesses.

Throughout, the site could feature ecological preservation, low-impact development, smart infrastructure, multi-modal transportation, green energy, resource efficiency, with a bio-regional orientation.

This type of development would also make a strong contribution to the EEZ and warrant all of the EEZ incentives.

*Recommendation 3: Develop an Eco-Smart Town Center, a set of Eco-Smart Villages, and a Green Business Park at the Palmer Ranch site in the EEZ or at some other location.*

Sub-planning Area 1 in the EEZ covers 685 acres intersected by State Route 681 and bounded on the east by I-75. It is being developed by Palmer Ranch Holdings.

Palmer Ranch has submitted a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment for this site which, of course, does not use the terminology and branding suggested in this Concept Paper, but, in effect, proposes the establishment of:

- An Eco-Smart Town Center that is a neighborhood that combines civic uses with recreation, lifestyle, culture, arts, education, entertainment, and lodging uses.
- Eco-Smart Villages that are mixed-use neighborhoods that are human-scale, walkable, and combine residential with neighborhood-serving retail and commercial uses.
- A Green Business Park that is an employment center that can combine various commercial, office, and light industrial uses that can be the home for Clean Tech and Green Businesses.

Throughout the site, Palmer Ranch is proposing a mixed use, low-impact development with multi-modal transportation and significant environmental amenities. Palmer Ranch has indicated in their plans that they will pursue LEED-ND certification.

Were the Palmer Ranch site developed as conceived in its proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment, this would be an excellent and exemplary type of development for the EEZ and would meet the criteria for receiving all of the EEZ incentives.

However, recently Justin Powell, Vice President of Palmer Ranch Holdings, informed GUD that Palmer Ranch was seriously considering withdrawing their 685-acre tract from the EEZ. If that were to happen, it would make sense to explore expanding the boundaries of the EEZ to include an Eco-Smart Town Center, a set of Eco-Smart Villages, and a Green Business Park elsewhere.

*Recommendation 4: To increase the Clean Tech and Green Business development/green employment potential of the EEZ and to establish a shorter time horizon for project impact, expand the EEZ boundaries to encompass an existing Business Park that could be upgraded to become a Green Business Park.*

Given the long time horizons for new development in general and particularly in the context of the continuing real estate recession, GUD recommends extending the EEZ boundaries to include an existing Business Park that could become a Green Business Park.

The retrofit of an existing Business Park to become a Green Business Park can proceed much more rapidly than new construction. The retrofits and any needed new construction should either meet the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED BD+C

(Building Design+Construction) standards or the Florida Green Building Coalition's Green Certification for Commercial Buildings.

Clean Tech companies and certified Green Businesses already located in or moving into a Green Business Park within the EEZ would immediately become eligible for any EEZ incentives. Any business already located in the Park could also become eligible for EEZ incentives by becoming certified as a Green Business, which would also save the businesses money and expand their market opportunities.

A Green Business Park could be a home for the Clean Tech and Green Businesses attracted and assisted by the business initiation, expansion, and attraction strategy described in Recommendation 7 below. Clean Tech and Green Businesses could begin locating there and generating green jobs relatively quickly.

Recommendation 5: *Establish a comprehensive set of regional and statewide green real estate incentives and Clean Tech and Green Business incentives for the EEZ.*

Companies select locations for new facilities for varying reasons. These include detailed Life Cycle Cost comparisons of various locations, proximity to raw materials or customers, availability of specialized workers, perceived business climate of the community, quality of life at a selected location, business support services, direct subsidies, and/or where the CEO or facility manager prefers to live.

Life Cycle Cost analysis includes one-time costs like land or building purchase and project approval; and repetitive costs like fees, labor, and taxes; the costs of energy, sewer, waste material disposal; and the cost of transportation for raw materials and finished product. These analyses are done by the locating companies.

Local government can only provide some of the input data into a Life Cycle Cost comparison, such as the amount of direct subsidies. Proximity of customers and/or raw materials usually cannot be changed by normal government policy. Availability of trained workers is influenced by workforce training programs but the availability of experienced workers is also often at least partially beyond the scope of local government.

However, direct subsidies, business support services, business climate, and quality of life are areas that local government can influence. The last criterion – quality of life where a CEO or division manager would like to live – is an area on which Sarasota County has successfully concentrated by promoting tourism. To date this policy has been effective, since quality of life was the key location factor identified by all the business leaders GUD interviewed.

However, since Sarasota County competes with other Florida and East Coast communities that also are desirable places to live, it has to be competitive in other incentives and in marketing the advantages of Sarasota.

Over the years the use of some incentives, especially direct subsidy incentives has ebbed and flowed. As the financial condition of the government and economic development agencies has changed the availability of subsidies has changed. To be competitive a local agency needs to do its best to match its competition.

In a survey of 18 other competitor regions, GUD found that the combined incentives available from the State of Florida, Sarasota County, and the Cities within Sarasota County are competitive with those available from adjoining states and communities. They are also competitive with communities and regions that are commonly rated as being successful in economic development. They are better in Direct Subsidies than some successful communities like San Diego County.

Sarasota County has recently developed a set of brochures advertising local and state incentives and recently added a set of additional incentives, including:

- Voter approval of an ad valorem tax exemption for companies that create high-quality jobs.
- Awarding \$2.7 million in job creation incentives to 12 start-up and expanding businesses.
- Awarding more than \$27 million in recovery zone facility bonds to growing businesses.
- Establishing an expedited permitting, web-based permitting, and a fast-track economic stimulus plan for local projects.

However, Sarasota County is not near the top of Economic Development indicators like new facility location. There are definitely some incentive areas that call for improvement but the major difference seems to be the marketing of Sarasota County as a good location for business and development both within the County and outside the County.

In addition to the GUD review of incentives offered by other jurisdictions, GUD also reviewed the incentives listed in the proposed but not approved EEZ Comprehensive Plan and the Florida State SB 2644 legislation proposed but not approved for the EEZ.

GUD agrees with the financial incentives for the EEZ listed in the proposed Comprehensive Plan and has added some additional incentives to that list. The Comprehensive Plan incentives also list many changes to existing regulations that would allow more flexible LEED compliance and GUD also agrees with those incentives.

The approach taken by SB 2644 of applying relevant Enterprise Zone incentives to the EEZ is a good and easily understood one. However SB 2644 did not include the Sales Tax Exemption for Electrical Energy, which is an Enterprise Zone incentive. GUD recommends adding the Sales Tax Exemption for Electrical Energy incentive to the list to be applied to the EEZ. (For additional information on this topic, see the GUD report: *Matrix of Incentives for the EEZ*)

Recommendation 6: *Undertake a Clean Tech and Green Business initiation, expansion, and attraction strategy for the EEZ.*

The key foundation for a Clean Tech/Green Business initiation, expansion, and attraction strategy for the EEZ is a robust County-wide business support infrastructure. (It doesn't make sense to try to establish a business support infrastructure just for the EEZ.)

Sarasota County has a number of the elements of a business support infrastructure in place, including:

- *A Guide to Doing Business* in Sarasota County.
- Customized free services available from the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation, addressing permitting, financing, technical and research assistance, and incentives.
- The Hub in the City of Sarasota.
- Digital Village at Lakewood Ranch.
- The Small Business Development Center of State College of Florida.
- Access to a Virtual Entrepreneur Center maintained by the Florida High Tech Corridor Council.
- A Virtual Incubator maintained by the Economic Development Foundation.
- The Regional Business Resource Center of Florida Gulf Coast.
- SCORE free business advice, counseling, mentoring and workshops by retired business executives.

In addition both the University of South Florida and State College of Florida are undertaking new business incubators, both with a Clean Tech orientation.

However, based on the many interviews GUD had with CEOs and business leaders, Sarasota County and the Cities in the County are not seen as being particularly business friendly and the business support infrastructure does not particularly target Clean Tech and Green Businesses. The County and the Cities are seen as waiting for businesses to come to them rather than aggressively pursuing businesses to partner with them to obtain what the businesses need.

It may be that perception is lagging behind reality, but, in the field of business initiation, expansion, and attraction, perception often becomes reality. Businesses that are investigating moving to a location almost always interview businesses that



are already located there to get their perspective on doing business in that location.

To build on the foundation that exists, GUD has recommended in *Prosperity in Paradise* that Sarasota County undertake a Business Development Network, establish a Clean Tech support infrastructure, and expand the Green Business Partnership. These actions, taken together, would essentially become an integrated Clean Tech/Green Business support infrastructure. Based on a strong Clean Tech/Green Business support infrastructure, it will be possible to undertake an effective Clean Tech/Green Business attraction effort. Sarasota County should consider joining the Cleantech Forum and attending its national conference, as well as establishing a presence in the American Solar Energy Society and other specific Clean Tech industry associations.

Once a Clean Tech/Green Business entrepreneur has launched a business in Sarasota County, or a Sarasota County Clean Tech/Green Business has communicated a desire to expand, or a Clean Tech/Green Business has indicated interest to move to Sarasota County, it is important to engage a “full court press” approach using a clear system for following up on every lead and every indication of interest, so that all interested businesses receive the appropriate responses and support.

Since the recent hiring of a new Executive Vice President with a strong business attraction background, the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation has put in place an integrated systematic business attraction effort. This is very important because the County has some catching up to do in this area. For example, the May 2010 issue of *Site Selection* magazine ([www.siteselection.com](http://www.siteselection.com)) contains the “Site Selection Annual Guide to Economic Developers”. Every state in the United States is listed with state agencies, local economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, and utilities. For the State of Florida there are 29 separate listings with entity name, telephone number, and web addresses. There is no individual listing or even mention of Sarasota County.

CoreNet Global is another example of this problem. CoreNet Global’s web site says they are the world’s leading association for corporate real estate and workplace professionals, service providers, and economic developers. They have over 6,500 members who represent 70% of the top 100 U.S. companies and nearly half of the Global 2000 companies. GUD was told that Sarasota County agencies do not participate in CoreNet Global.

Sarasota County should attend Society of Industrial and Office Realtors (SIOR) and CoreNet Global meetings and meet and establish relationships with top performing commercial brokers, especially from national brokerage firms. Some of these brokers have their main offices in Tampa with, in one case, a satellite office in

Sarasota. Periodically, someone should meet with the most successful brokers in the Tampa office.

*Recommendation 7: Constitute a multimodal transportation system for the EEZ, featuring walking, biking, electric vehicles, and efficient transportation infrastructure.*

The EEZ Comprehensive Plan Amendment calls for the adoption of a “Multimodal Plan for the EEZ that includes provisions for multimodal corridors to be designed to improve the function of streets as a means to move people, not just cars. Multimodal streets are designed to accommodate multiple modes of transportation comfortably, including pedestrians and bicycles modes, and public transportation, as well as private vehicles.”

The EEZ will produce impacts on existing traffic. However, a traffic analysis conducted according to Florida Department of Transportation standards found there would be 14,000 fewer trips per day if the EEZ sites are developed according to smart growth principles instead of a traditional residential community under the County’s existing Comprehensive Plan.

A full interchange at the intersection of I-75 and S.R. 681 has been integrated into the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. Ensuring that the build-out of the EEZ is timed with S.R. 681 interchange improvements may require intermediate-term access options until the full interchange is built.

Sarasota County is consulting with the Florida Department of Transportation on ways to make intermediate improvements that would provide exit/access in both southbound and northbound directions from I-75. Honore Boulevard is scheduled for construction through the EEZ in late 2010 and 2011, which will create an additional north-south corridor in the area and relieve pressure on existing roads.

It would be particularly useful to establish east-west access into the Landfill. This would address concerns from the City of Venice concerning traffic in and out of the Landfill and, at the same time, enhance the viability of the Landfill as Green Energy Park.

GUD recommends consideration of the establishment of a low-speed electric vehicle transportation system, including street designations and charging stations, as an important aspect of the multi-modal transportation system. Since Sarasota County is home to Cruise Car, a leader in low-speed electric vehicle transportation, Cruise Car could be an important partner and/or vender in relation to a low-speed electric vehicle system in the EEZ.

An effective multimodal transportation system will make a key contribution to accomplishing the EEZ goals of:

- Developing and implementing strategies for energy-efficient land-use patterns.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduce reliance on automobiles as a form of transportation.

However such a transportation system will also produce economic development benefits, by:

- Serving as a key factor in the marketing of the EEZ as an Eco-Smart Development that is state of the art for green economic development.
- Enhancing the livability of the mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Providing ease of access as well as increased worker satisfaction in the commercial and light industrial neighborhoods.

Recommendation 8: *Emphasize open space and environmental amenities in the EEZ, as well as establishing standards for Low Impact Development.*

All green economic development and, in particular, Eco-Smart Development means that the development that takes place needs to be in balance with land and open space preservation and conservation. At the same time, the development needs to be undertaken in a way that does not adversely impact the surrounding environment.

The current EEZ site is in proximity to a number of important environmental amenities. The site is located near Oscar Scherer Park, a large acreage of scrubby flatwoods makes this park one of the best places to see Florida scrub-jays, a threatened species found only in Florida. The park protects scrubby and pine flatwoods that were once widespread throughout Sarasota County and includes 15 miles of trails that provide opportunities for hiking, bicycling, and wildlife viewing. Canoeing and kayaking is available on South Creek, a blackwater stream that allows for excursions all the way into the Gulf of Mexico. Freshwater and saltwater fishing are also available along the creek and the shores of Lake Osprey, which is also the Park's swimming destination.

The Legacy Trail, which bisects the EEZ, is the largest public recreation project ever constructed in the area. Totaling more than 10 miles in length the trail runs from just south of the City of Sarasota to the City of Venice following the former CSX railroad corridor. The Legacy Trail hosts 15 areas to stop, rest, learn about its history, or just enjoy the natural beauty surrounding the trail. The rest stops include seven trailheads which offer access points at parks along the route. The Legacy Trail is the backbone of network of trails planned in Sarasota County.

Sarasota County's current Comprehensive Plan includes strong provisions for land preservation and conservation, including provisions for Oscar Scherer Park and the Legacy Trail. The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment proposes to expand park protections, including compatibility between the park and neighborhoods, through the use of buffers and open space for habitat and wildlife movement, and water resource management.

The County owned portion of the EEZ between Honore Avenue and I-75 is some distance from Oscar Scherer State Park and contains a lake. This portion may have potential for a use related to developing the EEZ concept. The rest of the property may have potential for the uses that further biodiversity and conservation.

Success of the EEZ in meeting its state mandated goals, generating County-wide support, and accomplishing true Eco-Smart Development requires careful integration of Low-Impact Development, open space, and environmental preservation.

*Recommendation 9: Formulate and implement an aggressive marketing strategy for the EEZ as an aspect of a Countywide Sustainable Economic Development Communications Initiative.*

Sarasota County already has a strong brand and an effective marketing effort in relation to tourism, environmental amenities, and quality of life. This is an important foundation for an EEZ communications and marketing strategy, because the quality of life and environmental amenities are the number one reason business (and CEOs) locate and grow in the County.

Building on this foundation that already exists, Sarasota County has the opportunity to go on to develop and implement a Communications Strategy in general with a specific Branding and Marketing emphasis in relation to the EEZ. This is discussed at greater length in *Prosperity in Paradise*.

Through this Communications Strategy, Sarasota County has an opportunity to brand the County as a region with an emerging Green Economy guided by a coherent Sustainable Economic Development Strategy that is attracting Clean Tech and Green Businesses. As an Eco-Smart Development, the EEZ can make a significant contribution to this effort.

Through its interviews, GUD learned that the County has a multi-faceted Communications Department that can undertake communications efforts through many different media. It will be important to establish clearly the responsibilities of the lead agency in a *Sustainable Economic Development Communications Initiative* and for that agency to work closely with collaborating agencies and city/regional stakeholders, as well as professional branding and marketing consultants, to develop a brand, a message, and an approach that works.

Frequently, public relations, media, and event-based marketing are more cost effective than the expenditure of advertising dollars. Successful implementation of Eco-Smart Development in the EEZ should yield a continuing flow of dozens of media-worthy stories to go along with all of the other stories embedded throughout the County's other Green Economy Initiatives.

By pursuing coverage of the different individual sustainability stories – framed in the Sarasota County Green Economy context – by news services, Internet blogs, television, radio, and the print media, the region can re-brand itself as a leading example of Sustainability 3.0 and as an emerging regional Green Economy, with Eco-Smart Development in the EEZ as a center piece.

Event-based marketing can also be an important aspect of a Communications Strategy. The lead and collaborating agencies can build on their lists of relevant sustainability organizations, industry associations, and government agencies to identify all of the relevant conferences and trade shows. Then they can work with the region's speaking resources to arrange for talks and presentations, addressing specific aspects of the region's green story in general and the Eco-Smart Development story of the EEZ in particular, emphasizing its Clean Tech/Green Business opportunities, incentives, and support. In addition, the region can develop its own *Building the Green Economy* annual conference.

There are a number of aspects of an EEZ marketing effort. The EEZ should have marketing brochures and other marketing materials dedicated to the EEZ. These brochures should be distributed by the EDC and the County at the same time they distribute other material to prospective clients. They should also be used when inquiries for the EEZ are received.

The EEZ will need staff to provide guidance and walk-through support for new industry or employers. This staff should have detailed EEZ knowledge of EEZ specific incentives, property available within the EEZ, County regulations, project approval procedures, and requirements for developing within the EEZ. EEZ staff should attend Society of Industrial and Office Realtors (SIOR) and CoreNet Global meetings and meet and establish relationships with top performing commercial brokers, especially from national brokerage firms. EEZ staff could be County staff, EDC staff, or some kind of separate office.

The EEZ staff should help new industries or employers wishing to locate within the EEZ with the County and City project-approval process, with County and State incentives, and provide "hand holding" through the approval process. The EEZ staff should collaborate in media and community relations, national and international promotions, and marketing.

## PART FOUR: EEZ IMPLEMENTATION

### Implementation Steps

The expectations built into the EEZ legislation are quite ambitious and the realization of those expectations by the Sarasota County EEZ will have a profoundly positive impact on the County.

However, in planning for EEZ implementation, it is important to be clear that much of the EEZ development will have a long (as much as 10 years or more) time horizon due to current economic conditions and also due to the time it takes to complete a real estate development.

Also, it is important to be realistic about the ability of the County and the EEZ – even with the best set of financial and other incentives and the best EEZ staff and operations – to impact basic market dynamics on real estate and business deals. Like all economic development strategies, the EEZ can help guide the market, but it can not substitute for the market.

Essentially, there are three basic phases of EEZ implementation:

1. Constitution of the EEZ.
2. Real estate development within the EEZ.
3. On-going EEZ operations in relation to the developed portions of the EEZ.

Phases 2 and 3 will proceed concurrently for much of the life of the EEZ.

Constitution of the EEZ will involve:

- Deciding, by Sarasota County, on the development concept – proposed as Eco-Smart Development by this concept paper – for the EEZ.
- Learning whether the Palmer Ranch property will stay within the EEZ.
- Determining whether and where to expand the EEZ.
- If the decision is made to expand the EEZ, modifying the EEZ Stakeholder Group to include representation from the additional areas and obtaining Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) approval for the expansion.
- Passing of a set of EEZ incentives by the Florida legislature.
- Revising, as appropriate, the proposed EEZ Comprehensive Plan Amendment; obtaining approval by DCA for the Comprehensive Plan Amendment; and passing of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment by the Sarasota County Commission.
- Deciding on the way EEZ operations will be structured and implementing that operational structure.

Once the EEZ has been constituted, detailed plans will need to be developed for each of the development sites. This plan development process will need to involve the collaboration of the private developers (in the case of privately owned sites), the EEZ Stakeholder Group, Sarasota County government, the Cities where the developments are located (in the case of potential expansion into Venice and North Port), and other community and environmental stakeholders.

It will be a long and somewhat complicated process. However, the process can be guided by a simple, straightforward, easily communicable development concept – Eco-Smart Development – and it will have a very great payoff for all of Sarasota County.

## Conclusion

The EEZ can play a very significant role in Sarasota County's Sustainable Economic Development Strategy – advancing Sarasota County as a Center for Innovation in Energy and Sustainability.

By embracing Eco-Smart Development, Sarasota County can accomplish real estate and business development that builds the Green Economy in Sarasota County in a way that diversifies and strengthens the Sarasota County economy and leads to enhanced economic prosperity that also preserves Sarasota County's unique environment and quality of life.

Through implementing Eco-Smart Development in the EEZ, Sarasota County can embrace Sustainability 3.0 and take its place again as a leader in the most sophisticated form of sustainability.

Sarasota County can become richer by becoming greener.

## Appendix A: Location of the EEZ

The current Sarasota County EEZ is in two parts, one is west of I-75 and the other is east of it. The west part borders I-75, but the east part is a little more than a mile east of the freeway.

The east part is the Central County Landfill site, which includes the Landfill proper, land that could be available for other uses, land set aside for biodiversity, and open space.

The west part is made up of two undeveloped privately owned parcels of land and a parcel owned by the County. Sub-planning Area 1 in the EEZ covers 685 acres bordered by State Road 681 and bounded on the east by I-75. It is being developed by Palmer Ranch Holdings. Sub-planning Area 2 (located southwest of Sub-planning Area 1) consists of 220 acres, also intersected by S.R. 681. It is being developed by a partnership of SDC Communities and Benderson Development. This land along State Road 681 is sometimes called the future "Green Mile". The County property is between Oscar Scherer State Park and I-75, and is divided by the extension of Honore Avenue.

State Road 681 in this area also borders Oscar Scherer State Park, an eco-park which is outside the EEZ. The EEZ area is bisected by the 10 mile walking and bicycling path, the Legacy Trail, which runs from the City of Sarasota to the City of Venice.

The Laurel Road light industrial area in the City of Venice, including the Triple Diamond Commerce Park and other business sites, is to the south of the Landfill and the EEZ. There is substantial additional open space to the east of the EEZ.

Currently, the only access to the Central County Land Fill and the eastern portion of the EEZ is from the City of Venice via Laurel Road and Haul Road/Knights Trail Road past the Venice Triple Diamond business park. There is approximately a mile of undeveloped land between the northernmost portion of the EEZ and State Road 72 to the north.