

PROSPERITY IN PARADISE:  
Growing the Sustainable Economy in  
Sarasota County

Strategic Recommendations  
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Global Urban Development

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## SECTION I – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2010, Sarasota County contracted with Global Urban Development (GUD) to develop recommendations for how the County could become a Center for Innovation in Energy and Sustainability, including recommendations for an economic concept for the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ).<sup>1</sup>

GUD has evolved a coherent methodology for assisting places to undertake Sustainable Economic Development Strategies. GUD applied this methodology to produce a unique Sustainable Economic Development Strategy for Sarasota County that leverages the region's environmental and sustainability heritage as a vehicle for economic prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

The Sustainable Economic Development Strategy that GUD is recommending embraces three trends that give Sarasota County a strategic advantage:

1. Location-neutral entrepreneurs, managers, and workforce.
2. 50 to 80 year old second/third career "Neverretirees."
3. The emerging Sustainable Economy, including Clean Tech Businesses, Green Businesses, and Eco-Smart Development.

By embracing these trends, the County can become a sub-tropical paradise with a vibrant diversified economy, based on Clean Tech/Green Businesses and Eco-Smart Development, powered by Neverretirees and other location-neutral entrepreneurs who value/contribute to the environment and the quality of life in the County. That is, Sarasota County can find "Prosperity in Paradise."

To realize this opportunity, GUD is making specific recommendations that seek to take Sarasota County to a new level of economic excellence that simultaneously builds wealth and sustainable communities.<sup>3</sup> The recommendations are based on the following premises:

- Sarasota County has a unique opportunity to have all the relaxation and cultural amenities of a sub-tropical vacation environment *and* all the dynamism of a wealth creating entrepreneurial culture.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2009, Sarasota County was selected as one of two pilot locations in the State of Florida for an Energy Economic Zone (EEZ). The purpose of the EEZ concept is to provide incentives that advance development that reduces reliance on automotive transportation, encourages green building, encourages green economic development, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

<sup>2</sup> Financial support for this project is provided through a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

<sup>3</sup> The process for developing these recommendations involved three site visits to Sarasota County; over 60 interviews with stakeholders, including more than 30 CEOs; and review and analysis of a large number of relevant background documents.

- The vast majority (up to 95%) of job growth comes from the expansion of existing firms and the birth of new companies – with typically less than 2% coming from new companies moving into a region.<sup>4</sup> The focus of the effort should be on growing the local economic base through entrepreneurship and expansion, while also pursuing appropriate business attraction.
- The key to success will be in attracting and supporting entrepreneurial talent in the region. There are many entrepreneurs building high growth companies in Sarasota County who will attest to the fact that it is an attractive place to be an entrepreneur.
- Sarasota County has some catching up to do on the basics of business development – both for growing jobs and enterprises locally, as well as for attracting targeted companies to the region. It lacks the experience and sophistication in this area that many of its competitors have built over decades.
- The County is at an important “inflection point” in this work. The recession has created a much broader understanding of the need to change, and many positive actions have been taken in response to that, including new business incentives, a new strategic plan by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), and a new approach to business attraction.
- The County needs a shared vision of what kind of economic development it wants to pursue, and what unique differentiating assets it has to compete for that development.
- There are terrific assets to build on – not just academic and cultural assets, but also significant progress in strategic focus on economic development strategy over the last several years. The political will, financial resources, and technical capacity are there to make a long term investment in a successful strategy.

Based on these premises, the GUD recommendations are designed to help Sarasota County accomplish the following objectives:

Mission

***To grow jobs by positioning Sarasota County as a location of choice for Clean Technology (Clean Tech) and Green Businesses and Eco-Smart Real Estate Development projects.***

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<sup>4</sup> “Job Creation on a Budget – How Regional Clusters Can Add Jobs, Bolster Entrepreneurship, and Spark Innovation”, Mark Muro, Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation, January, 2011.

## Vision

***The Sarasota County region is recognized as a premier location for starting and growing Clean Tech and Green Businesses and launching Eco-Smart Real Estate developments, especially for second-career entrepreneurs and developers.***

The GUD team is making seven recommendations to achieve these objectives. These are summarized below:

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Recommendation</b>                                      | <b>Goal</b>   |
|------------|--|---|
| 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>Innovate Eco-Smart Development</i>                      | Support Eco-Smart Development in the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ), and elsewhere.   |
| 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. |

The key actions to support these recommendations are summarized below.

| No. | Recommendation   | Implementation Actions  |
|-----|--|---|
| 1   | <i>Initiate a Business Development Network</i>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a partnership between Sarasota County, the EDC, and other parties to develop a regional Business Development Network.</li> <li>▪ Focus on establishment and growth of Clean Tech/Green companies.</li> <li>▪ Use the Network to assist second career entrepreneurs (“Neverirees”) in Sarasota County and to recruit them to Sarasota County.</li> <li>▪ Organize a team of private sector volunteers to drive the design of the Network.</li> <li>▪ Include: a capital pipeline; business acceleration system; business advisor service; intellectual property commercialization; and an “Entrepreneur Concierge.”</li> <li>▪ Staff the Network with individuals who have private sector experience in business development.</li> </ul> |
| 2   | <i>Expand the Green Business Partnership</i>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand the marketing and the staffing of the Green Business Partnership.</li> <li>▪ Set the goal of becoming the county with the highest per capita rate of certified Green Businesses in the nation.</li> <li>▪ Develop a robust set of follow-on activities for businesses that receive Green Business certification.</li> <li>▪ Use this Network to promote joint ventures, business-to-business (B-B) and business-to-consumer (B-C) transactions, and advanced assistance to save more money.</li> <li>▪ Encourage the initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses.</li> </ul>   |
| 3   | <i>Establish a Clean Technology Support Infrastructure</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop an inventory of Clean Technology companies, and update the inventory on an annual basis.</li> <li>▪ Initiate and staff a Sarasota County Clean Technology Network including: Clean Tech firms; investors; utilities; service providers; academic institutions; and economic development organizations.</li> <li>▪ Launch sub-sector networks in promising market segments, including: Green Construction; Water Technology; Renewable Energy; Sustainable Agriculture; and Aquaculture.</li> <li>▪ Develop a strategic relationship between the Network and the Ringling College of Art and Design to link local companies to faculty and student talent.</li> </ul>   |

| No. | Recommendation  | Implementation Actions   |
|-----|---|--|
| 4   | <i>Launch a Green Energy and Resource Recovery Park</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a Green Energy Park at the Landfill that is a center for green energy production.</li> <li>▪ Generate energy from a mix of photovoltaic, solar thermal, methane gas, wind, geothermal, biomass, and emission-free waste-to-energy as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Sell energy at a discount to EEZ residences and businesses.</li> <li>▪ Establish a “waste to wealth” Resource Recovery Park at the Landfill for businesses that use the Landfill waste stream as a source of raw material inputs to production.</li> <li>▪ Co-locate recycling, reuse, compost processing, manufacturing, and retail businesses.</li> </ul> |
| 5   | <i>Innovate Eco-Smart Development</i>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make Eco-Smart Development a key organizing concept for the EEZ and elsewhere in the County.</li> <li>▪ Utilize the Five types of Eco-Smart Development: Eco-Smart Villages; Eco-Smart Town Centers; Green Energy/Resource Recovery Parks; Green Business Parks; and Green Shopping Centers.</li> <li>▪ Expand the EEZ to include other areas.</li> <li>▪ Implement incentives for Eco-Smart Development and Clean Tech/Green Business in the EEZ.</li> <li>▪ Encourage EEZ development with business support services, and aggressive communications and marketing.</li> </ul>   |
| 6   | <i>Organize a Green Talent Response System</i>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respond to entry and mid-skill green employment on a “Just-in-Time” not a “Just-in-Case” basis.</li> <li>▪ Work with Suncoast Workforce and CareerEdge to evolve a career pathways approach to Green Talent.</li> <li>▪ Encourage Sarasota County-based green career degree and credentialing programs, e.g. State College of Florida’s degree in Energy Technology Management.</li> <li>▪ Focus at the level of green entrepreneurial and managerial capacity as well as entry level green jobs.</li> </ul>  |
| 7   | <i>Formulate a Communications Strategy</i>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake brand development to position Sarasota County as a unique place for entrepreneurs to create “Prosperity in Paradise.”</li> <li>▪ Develop a clear set of messaging themes.</li> <li>▪ Formulate a coordinated communications plan to establish the County as a premier location for Clean Tech/Green Business and Eco-Smart Development.</li> <li>▪ Create a common visual and graphic look across the multiple externally-facing County websites.</li> </ul>  |

## SECTION II – THE SARASOTA COUNTY CONTEXT

For several decades, Sarasota County has prospered under a relatively simple economic development formula. In an interview with the Global Urban Development (GUD) team, a leader in Sarasota County described the County’s economic development strategy as: *“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 preservationists on the other side – that development in Sarasota County would preserve and protect the environment.

Sarasota County 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.

The recession has led to a clear recognition of the need for a diversified economic development strategy, and the County has taken some significant steps to move in that direction, including the development of a new *Five Year Economic Development Strategic Plan* for the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

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*“What has worked historically has been selling Sarasota County – its beauty and its lifestyle. As a result, we are way too heavily dependent on tourism and construction. And we haven’t really gotten our arms around a clear definition of economic development. This doesn’t happen overnight. It takes long term commitment.”*

*“Up until the real estate crash, we were not really concerned with economic development. We were focused on tourism and the construction work it generated. Now we are scratching our heads and asking what we do next.”*

*“We are complacent about tourism and construction. And the business community has been dominated by these interests. I think we now realize we can’t depend on these alone. But we are not clear on what comes next.”*

*“I came from a community that had an economic development infrastructure that was well developed. It was a bit of a shock coming here and seeing how little was in place.”*

*“We used to be the last to get into a recession and the first to get out. Now we are the first in and the last out.”*

*– Selected quotes from GUD interviews with Sarasota leaders –*

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The EDC plan begins with a realistic assessment of the challenges facing the region, including:<sup>5</sup>

- A lack of focused incentives and tools to support business development, retention and attraction.
- A broad perception that the County has an unfriendly business climate, with local governments being viewed as “indifferent at best” to the needs of the business community.
- A general consensus that “the public sector leadership does not have a realistic view about what it really takes to be economically competitive.”
- A lack of infrastructure for regional collaboration.
- A lack of innovation capacity in the County, including business incubators, access to capital networks, technical assistance, and access to sources of proprietary intellectual capital.

The EDC 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 addition to the EDC plan, the County has recently invested substantial resources in economic development incentives. In 2010, over \$7.5 million was provided in incentives to support the growth of local businesses.<sup>6</sup> Other key investments in economic development have included:

- Implementation of the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption.
- Support for a Spring Training Facility and Aquatic Nature Center.
- Funding of Phase I and II for a Rowing Facility.
- Investment of over \$17 million in Recovery Zone Facility Bonds for local companies.
- Focus of Neighborhood Services offices on business relations.

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<sup>5</sup> These observations, including quotes, are taken from the EDC strategic plan: “*Sarasota County Five Year Economic Development Strategic Plan*”, April, 2009. See pp 12-17. Most of these observations were reinforced in interviews conducted by the GUD team.

<sup>6</sup> “*Update on Sarasota County Economic Development Initiatives*”, Sarasota County, January 2011

Sarasota County has also begun promoting the economic benefits of sustainability for businesses and households, through:

- The Energy Star Change a Light, Change the World Program.
- Installation of energy efficient LED lights in County facilities.
- Implementation of the County Energy Management Action Plan.
- Use of hybrid diesel-electric buses.
- The Get Energy Smart Retrofit Program.
- The implementation of the Green Business Partnership to help businesses derive savings from sustainability strategies.

It is clear that the County is at an important “inflection point” in its approach to economic development. It has recognized the need for a more diversified economy, and it has begun making important investments in a strategy to achieve that.

The GUD recommendations are designed to build on that momentum and help the County move to the next level of performance excellence in economic development, by using its historic commitment to sustainability<sup>7</sup> to make the County an attractive location for entrepreneurs of Clean Tech and Green Businesses, and developers of Eco-Smart Developments.

### Moving to Sustainability 3.0

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 CEOs 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 the 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 competitive advantages.

Therefore, it is realistic for Sarasota County to ground its efforts at economic diversification in its commitment to preserving its environment and enhancing its quality of life, i.e. its commitment to sustainability.

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<sup>7</sup> A detailed history of Sarasota’s leadership in the sustainability field is provided in the Attachment: “*Proposed Sarasota County Communications Plan*.”

GUD has found it useful to make 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. Typically the actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are 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, Eco-Smart 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 get richer by becoming greener and greener by becoming richer.

All three forms of Sustainability are important and the most recent Sustainability Plans in the nation are beginning to incorporate all three perspectives.

The Sarasota County business and civic leaders interviewed by GUD found this formulation helpful in understanding Sarasota County's situation. Sarasota County has been a leader in Sustainability 1.0 but not in the recently popular Sustainability 2.0. Now Sarasota County has the opportunity to step forward as a leader in Sustainability 3.0.

## SECTION III – THE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY OPPORTUNITY

One of the deliverables of the Global Urban Development (GUD) engagement with Sarasota County is a “taxonomy” of Green Businesses. The details of this deliverable are available in the attachment: *Green Economy Classification System*. Some of the key features of this description of the green economy are summarized below.

### The Economic Paradigm Shift

Undertaking a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy 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 economy that is low pollution, energy/resource efficient, low carbon, and ecologically supportive.

Businesses, cities, communities, and regions that lead this revolution will prosper, because, over the long run, the new 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 information technology 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 Silicon Valley/the San Francisco Bay Area becoming one of the leading economic regions in the world.

It needs to be emphasized continuously that society is at the early stages of the sustainability revolution leading to a Green Economy, and the final shape of this market is far from clear.

In addition, many aspects of the transformation are still unclear. This maximizes the value of resilience and capacity for rapid response and adaptation.

It does appear to be very clear, however, that competitive advantage will increasingly accrue to businesses and communities that take a “triple bottom line”

approach – simultaneously building natural capital, social/human capital, and economic capital.

In particular, resource efficiency will increasingly become a critical competitiveness strategy – and eventually the power of the market will not only be focused on “preserving” resources and minimizing their use, but actually restoring and regenerating the capacity of the earth’s life support systems.

Finally, there is a dimension of this work that is often overlooked and that bears highlighting – and this is the economic development potential of what are sometimes referred to as “sustainability savings” or “green savings.”

The combined impact of improved energy efficiency in buildings, reduced water use, more efficient transportation systems, and more compact walkable communities can have a significant impact on household income and broad “cost of living” affordability.<sup>8</sup>

### Defining the Sustainable Economy

It is useful to have a classification system to assist in understanding the emergence of a Sustainable Economy. GUD distinguishes three key aspects of the emerging Sustainable Economy:

1. **Clean Tech Businesses:** businesses that produce an environmental product and/or service – meaning a product or service that conserves energy or other natural resources, and/or reduces pollution. (These are “producers” of green products or services.)
2. **Green Businesses:** businesses that are managed in a way that minimizes adverse environmental impacts, regardless of the products and services that the business offers. (These are “users” of green products and services.)
3. **Eco-Smart Development:** Developments that feature: ecological preservation; smart, mixed use, low-impact development; multimodal transportation; green energy and resource efficiency; a bio-regional

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<sup>8</sup> As just one small example, the average annual cost of automobile ownership is approximately \$5,000 a year. So being able to get rid of one car is the equivalent to a \$5,000 pay raise – a huge impact, especially for low and moderate income households. This extra income in turn stimulates purchasing power in the economy.

orientation; all working together to produce livable communities. (See Recommendation 5 and the Attachment, *Eco-Smart Development in the EEZ and Elsewhere* for a discussion of Eco-Smart Development.)

## Categories of Clean Technology Businesses

There are many different ways of categorizing Clean Tech Businesses. A short summary of the primary categories is included in the table below.

| Category   | Description   | Segments   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Clean Energy Sources</b>                                | <i>The production, storage and distribution of renewable or low carbon energy sources.</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean energy generation</li> <li>• Energy storage</li> <li>• Energy infrastructure</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Energy Efficiency</b>                                   | <i>Technologies and services that reduce the amount of energy consumed by different sectors of the economy.</i>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building energy efficiency</li> <li>• Appliances and controls</li> <li>• Energy management</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Green Production Practices</b>                          | <i>Enterprises that produce products and services or use production practices that reduce the consumption of natural resources.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation and logistics</li> <li>• Manufacturing and industrial</li> <li>• Materials and nano-technologies</li> <li>• Green construction</li> <li>• Agriculture</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pollution Mitigation, Conservation, and Restoration</b> | <i>Enterprises and technologies focused on reducing pollution or conserving and restoring natural ecologies.</i>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water and wastewater</li> <li>• Air and environment</li> <li>• Materials recovery and recycling</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Support Services</b>                                    | <i>Consulting and other services that help enterprises develop and implement green and clean technologies.</i>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy and policy</li> <li>• Green business consulting</li> <li>• Green finance</li> <li>• Research and development</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>                           |

## How Big is the Clean Tech “Producing” Aspect of the Sustainable Economy?

A recent (April 2010) report by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration (ESA) conducted a detailed assessment of the size of the Clean Tech green producing economy. The *Measuring the Green Economy* report looked at 732 detailed product codes for green products and services. Based on this analysis, they came to the following conclusions:

- Clean Tech products and services comprised 1% to 2% of the total private business economy in 2007.
- The number of Clean Tech jobs ranged from 1.8 million to 2.4 million.
- The services sector accounted for 75% of Clean Tech activity; manufacturing for 13%.

- Energy conservation, resource conservation, and pollution control accounted for 80% to 90% of Clean Tech Business activity.
- The Clean Tech economy is in a position to grow quickly, but the relatively small size of the Clean Tech economy suggests that a majority of the new growth during the recovery will come from products and services outside of the green economy.
- The process for measuring the Clean Tech economy is far from exact; better definitions and alignment of data sources are needed.

It is clear from this analysis that a region cannot base its entire economic development strategy on the creation, growth, and attraction of “Clean Technology” enterprises. Otherwise, the region will be ignoring over 95% of its economic base. Having acknowledged this, there are four reasons why an emphasis on Clean Tech Businesses makes sense for the Sarasota County region:

1. These businesses are consistent with the environmental and sustainability heritage of the region.
2. These segments of the economy are growing much more rapidly than many other segments.<sup>9</sup>
3. The availability of Clean Tech enterprises can enhance Green Business activity – leading to efficiency improvements in existing firms.
4. Eventually *all* companies in Sarasota County should be “green” companies – companies that are committed to improving efficiency and competitiveness through energy and resource conservation – thereby expanding the local market for Sarasota County Clean Tech Businesses.

### Green Business is Good Business

The contribution of Green Businesses to the Sarasota County regional economy, on the other hand, can be quite substantial. To a significant degree, this is because leading larger corporations are embracing the perspective that green business is good business. Recognizing the economic opportunities inherent in going green, many leading corporations are taking significant actions:

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<sup>9</sup> Next 10 recently reported that green jobs in California are growing at a rate three times faster than other jobs in the economy. (See: [http://www.next10.org/next10/publications/green\\_jobs/2011.html](http://www.next10.org/next10/publications/green_jobs/2011.html))

- According to its Sustainability Progress Report, Wal-Mart has committed to an environmental responsibility program, 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 gas emissions reduced by 8% from 2004 levels.
- DuPont reports on its social and environmental progress using the Global Reporting Initiative reporting format and is independently monitored by Environmental Resource Management. DuPont has 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 communications.
- 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.
- 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, Heinz, Google, Random House, Nike, Starbucks, Time Warner, 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.

Sarasota examples include:

- Doctors Hospital's "Linen Conservation Initiative" saving more than 51,000 kWh 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, 12,480 kWh of electricity, and 21,840 gallons of water.
- Venice Golf and Country Club reducing nitrogen and other contaminants released into the Myakka River watershed by more than 4,000 pounds per year by irrigating the property with captured storm water, and also removing invasive trees and plants and replanting 13 wetland preserves with native plants.

By encouraging Clean Tech Businesses and Green Businesses – because they are not environmentally adverse and in many cases are environmentally positive – Sarasota County can grow and diversify its economy while, at the same time, maintaining and enhancing its environment and its quality of life.

### Defining Green Jobs

Green Businesses, Clean Tech Businesses, and Eco-Smart Developments produce “Green Jobs” in the emerging Green Economy. However, there is no standard definition for what constitutes a green job.

WorkForce Florida's definition is a good broad definition:

*“A green job increases the conservation and sustainability of natural resources for the benefit of Floridians. This includes jobs that reduce energy usage or lower carbon emissions, and protect Florida's natural resources. Green jobs should provide worker-friendly conditions, pay sustainable wages, and offer opportunities for continued skill training and career growth.”*

The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (known as O\*Net) additionally differentiates between three kinds of “green jobs”:

- **Increased Demand Jobs** – Existing occupational categories that are likely to experience growth because of increased demand for green products and services. These jobs typically don't require a new set of skills. (An example is a machinist who works in a metal forming company that shifts to making parts for wind turbines.)
- **Enhanced Skills** – Occupations that will require a new set of skills to accommodate the requirements of green markets. (An example would be automotive service technicians who need to learn new skills to maintain electric vehicles.)
- **New and Emerging Occupations** – New occupational categories created by the development of new markets and new firms. (An example would be Biofuels Production Managers – individuals who manage operations at biofuels power generation facilities.)

## Sustainable Economic Development Strategies

GUD has evolved a coherent methodology for assisting places to undertake Sustainable Economic Development Strategies in order to build Sustainable Economies. In general, a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy has four key objectives, which GUD refers to as the **Four Greens**:

**Green Savings** – encouraging businesses, families, communities, and governments to cut costs, and save money by efficiently using renewable resources and by reducing and reusing waste, with the goal of all businesses becoming Green Businesses.

**Green Opportunities** – growing Clean Tech companies, jobs, and incomes through business development and expansion of the markets for products and services that conserve resources and prevent pollution.

**Green Talent** – investing in the fundamental assets of education, research, technological innovation, and modern entrepreneurial and workforce skills, because people are now the world’s most vital green economic resource.

**Green Places** – promoting Eco-Smart Development that features low-impact, mixed-use, resource-efficient design and utilizes multi-modal transportation, sustainable infrastructure, and green energy to protect and enhance the natural and built environment, leading to communities and regions that are more attractive, livable, healthy, vibrant, prosperous, and productive.

GUD applied this methodology, working with Sarasota County staff and business and community leaders, to assess the Sarasota County economy and to produce a unique Sustainable Economic Development Strategy for Sarasota County that leverages the region’s environmental and sustainability heritage as a vehicle for economic prosperity.

## SECTION IV – THE CONCEPT: “PROSPERITY IN PARADISE”

### **Summary of Key Points:**

- *Market Sarasota County as a premier location for “Prosperity in Paradise.”*
- *Use this marketing to diversify the Sarasota County economy in a way that enhances the quality of life and the environment.*
- *Focus on Clean Tech/Green Businesses and Eco-Smart Developments.*
- *Emphasize recruitment of second/third career 50 to 80 year olds.*

The Global Urban Development (GUD) team believes that Sarasota County has a unique set of assets that can be leveraged to create a differentiated position in the economic development marketplace.

### Strategic Positioning

This positioning can be organized around the following strategic concepts:

- *Sarasota County’s Deep Sustainability Culture.* Sustainability is deeply embedded in the culture of the community, and Sarasota County understands that it is necessary to protect and preserve the natural and human environment to ensure long-term health, prosperity, and quality of life. Sarasota County should present itself as a national leader in sustainability practices, committed to being on the leading edge of this movement.
- *“Prosperity in Paradise.”* This phrase communicates the idea that Sarasota County combines the characteristics of a sub-tropical paradise (beaches, fishing, leisure, culture, fine food, and other attributes of high-amenity communities) with the vibrant energy of wealth creation and all that it connotes – innovation; creativity; profit; growth; dynamic exchange; and risk-taking. This goes beyond the “me too” tag lines of a “great place to live, work, and play,” which can be seen on hundreds and even thousands of economic development web sites. It seeks to put two traditionally opposing attributes in dynamic relationship with each other.
- *“Neverretirees.”<sup>10</sup>* A significant source of entrepreneurial dynamism in Sarasota County is the region’s “Neverretiree” population – business

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<sup>10</sup> Additional detail is provided in Attachment 6 – *Attracting and Retaining 50-80 Year Old Green Talent.*

executives who have had one career; moved to Sarasota County for its natural and cultural amenities; and then launched a second round of companies in their “retirement” community. This phenomenon is consistent with the findings of the Kauffman Foundation that the 55-64 age group currently has the highest rates of entrepreneurship in society.

Historically, being a “retirement” destination has been perceived as a detriment to business vitality. Sarasota County has the opportunity to turn this perception on its head and use its attractiveness as a retirement community as an entrepreneurship engine – branding the region as *the* place to go if you want to “have your cake and eat it too” – enjoy all the attributes of a world class vacation and retirement community, while joining a dynamic business network.

In the GUD interviews, the GUD team found an unusual number of high growth entrepreneurs who were located in Sarasota County primarily because of their love of the “place.” The ways in which “place” attracted them varied:

- Some had returned to Sarasota County after having lived in other places.
  - Some had “retired” and then found the entrepreneurial urge impossible to resist.
  - Some had simply located their offices where they loved to be – in Sarasota County – with their main operations elsewhere.
- *Community and a Sense of Place.* Sarasota County’s small size can be perceived as a disadvantage when compared to locations like San Francisco, Boston, New York, Atlanta, and Seattle. But it also offers benefits that appeal deeply to older location-neutral knowledge workers – a sense of community, a more relaxed lifestyle, and a civic scale that makes it easy to get involved and have an impact.
- *An Artistic Culture and a Design Ethic.* Sarasota County’s artistic culture and the design ethic that it has supported are also key attributes. The arts culture enhances the sense of place (which so many “retirement” communities lack); and the design culture (especially the asset of the Ringling College of Art and Design) generates a set of potential creative resources that can support business innovation.

## The New Economic Development Reality: Knowledge-Intensive, Location-Neutral

The GUD team believes Sarasota's strategic positioning assets are consistent with a new economic development reality. This reality is that an increasingly large percentage of knowledge-intensive workers are "location-neutral" – they can choose where they want to work. In other words, instead of going to where the work is and trying to make it a nice location to live, they go to where they want to live and make their work happen there. This phenomenon is described by *Future of Work* pioneers Jim Ware and Charlie Grantham:

*"In other words, work is no longer geographically restricted. Both knowledge and wealth are now being created largely by workers who are "location neutral." That is, they can do their work in locations that are widely separated from the offices of the companies they are doing it for. This important transformation in how wealth is created is beginning to have a profound impact on both the economy as a whole and the principles of regional economic development."*

This creates a whole new economic development game – and one that not coincidentally favors mid-sized communities like Sarasota County that have high amenity factors:

*"One significant result of this shift, as we've written elsewhere, is that much of the population growth in the United States these days is occurring in what the census bureau now calls "micropolises": smaller cities and regional areas with populations between 50,000 and 100,000.<sup>11</sup> High-speed broadband Internet access puts those smaller communities right on a par with major metropolitan areas like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dublin, and even Bangalore."<sup>12</sup>*

Economic development has traditionally been about the process of attracting new business operations that in turn provide jobs for local residents. In the knowledge economy, the traditional approach of focusing on businesses as the source of economic growth is no longer a sufficient strategy for economic development.

While communities will always be engaged in some versions of business attraction, in the early years of the twenty-first century the critical effort is going

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<sup>11</sup> The population for the City of Sarasota is approximately 52,000, and for the County, 380,000.

<sup>12</sup> "Knowledge Workers and Economic Development", WIRED West Michigan Concept Document, February 2007.

to be about building, and in some cases re-building, communities so that they **develop, attract, and retain talent** first and foremost. **Businesses and new jobs will follow talent instead of vice versa.**

In other words, economic development today is being turned upside down. It's no longer about people flocking to job opportunities; it's about mobile knowledge-worker talent moving to where they want to live – with companies and jobs following. As a result, the characteristics of communities that make them attractive to economic development opportunities are rapidly changing. The attributes of a community that attract highly talented “creative workers” center around quality of life issues, psychological wants and needs, and “brand.” These communities all have a distinct “sense of place.”

Sarasota County has the core ingredients for this kind of “place-making” – a mixture of natural amenities; culture and art; civic engagement; and a sense of global connectivity that attracts wealth-creating knowledge workers. Recognizing this as a core economic development asset, and leveraging it for regional prosperity has some practical implications that run counter to some of the traditional economic development approaches.

- The primary unit of economic development transaction is the individual. So the mode of engagement is networks – social, business, and peer to peer, not “programs.”
- The primary value proposition is the community and regional “brand” – incentives and economic development tools are important, but secondary and supporting. Remember – talent is moving to a “place”, not to take advantage of a program.
- The “brand” has to be **authentic** (validated by other users, not just the brand promoters, and based on real, not imaginary, attributes); **compelling** (evoking emotional reactions and bonds); **distinctive** (stands out against other brands – not a “me too” effort); and **consistent** (used in a coordinated way across multiple venues and multiple target audiences).
- In this scenario, business development emerges from four primary sources:
  1. **Brand Attractiveness.** Location-neutral knowledge workers creating their own enterprises after they move to the Sarasota County region.
  2. **The “Tom Sawyer” Effect.** Entrepreneurs convincing members of their social networks to locate in Sarasota County.
  3. **Brand Loyalty.** Companies in Sarasota County choosing to stay and expand in the region because of the attractiveness of the brand.

4. **Focused Business Attraction.** Companies locating in Sarasota County because of a critical agglomeration of specialized talent.<sup>13</sup>

Brand Concept: “Prosperity in Paradise”

The Sustainable Economic Development Strategy that GUD is recommending suggests that Sarasota County embrace three trends that can give Sarasota County a strategic advantage:

1. Location-neutral entrepreneurs, managers, and workforce.
2. 50 to 80 year old second/third career “Neverretirees.”
3. The emerging Sustainable Economy, including Clean Tech Businesses, Green Businesses, and Eco-Smart Development.

By embracing these trends, the County can become a sub-tropical paradise with a vibrant diversified economy, based on Clean Tech/Green Businesses and Eco-Smart Development, powered by Neverretirees and other location-neutral entrepreneurs who value/contribute to the environment and the quality of life in the County. That is, Sarasota County can find “Prosperity in Paradise.”

GUD believes that the brand concept “Prosperity in Paradise” distills the Sarasota County opportunity to be and to be seen as a sub-tropical paradise with a vibrant diversified economy. A Mission and a Vision can formalize the Sustainable Economic Development objectives inherent in this brand concept.

Mission

***To grow jobs by positioning Sarasota County as a location of choice for Clean Technology (Clean Tech) and Green Businesses and Eco-Smart Real Estate Development projects.***

Vision

***The Sarasota County region is recognized as a premier location for starting and growing Clean Tech and Green Businesses and launching Eco-Smart Real Estate developments, especially for second-career entrepreneurs and developers.***

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<sup>13</sup> This is why Pixar located an animation studio in Vancouver – because of an abundance of local computer graphics and animation talent.



## SECTION V – RECOMMENDATIONS

Global Urban Development (GUD) is making seven recommendations to Sarasota County to assist in achieving the County’s Sustainable Economic Development objectives. These are summarized in the table below. Additional detail is provided on each recommendation in the remainder of this section.

| 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 Clean Tech and Green 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>Innovate Eco-Smart Development</i>                      | Support innovations in Eco-Smart Development in the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ), and throughout 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. |

## **RECOMMENDATION 1 – INITIATE A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT NETWORK**

### ***Recommendation Summary:***

- *Create a partnership between Sarasota County, the EDC, and other parties to develop a regional Business Development Network.*
- *Focus on assisting the growth of existing Clean Tech and Green entrepreneurial companies in the region and on the start-up of new Clean Tech and Green ventures.*
- *Use the Network to assist second career entrepreneurs (“Neveretirees”) in Sarasota County and to recruit them to the County as well as to assist younger entrepreneurs .*
- *Organize a team of private sector volunteers to drive the design of the Network.*
- *Include: a capital pipeline; business acceleration system; business advisor service; intellectual property commercialization; and an “Entrepreneur Concierge.”*
- *Staff the Network with individuals who have private sector experience in business development.*

As has been noted in several different sections of this report, Sarasota County is early in the development of a robust business development infrastructure and therefore lacks some capacities that other regions take for granted. The typical elements of a business development infrastructure that warrant more deliberate development and investment include the following:

- A well-integrated **capital pipeline** that supports businesses as they move from one stage of development to another. This would include:
  - Angel and seed capital networks and funds.
  - Venture capital networks and funds.
  - Mezzanine debt.
  - Working capital and growth capital.
  - Private equity investment.
- A **business acceleration support system** that helps companies at different stages with:
  - Market analysis and business planning.

- Capital raising and offering memoranda.
  - Management team recruiting.
  - Acquisition of high quality business services.
  - Board development.
  - Physical space and back office support infrastructure.
- **Entrepreneurship development** that helps entrepreneurs develop skills needed at different stages of business development.
  - An **intellectual property (IP) commercialization infrastructure** that links entrepreneurs and investors to potential sources of IP at universities, federal labs, private labs, and other sources of invention and discovery.
  - A strong **business attraction, retention, and expansion** program that works with existing companies to help them grow in the region, and targets the appropriate companies for location in the County.
  - **Peer networks** that connect business entrepreneurs with each other in ways that maximize generative relationship building.
  - A **business development infrastructure** that integrates all these pieces at the regional level with appropriate state and federal resources.

The Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Strategic Plan made a number of recommendations related to the building of a business assistance infrastructure, many of which have been integrated into the EDC Business Plan. The key elements are summarized below.

| <b>Infrastructure Elements</b> | <b>Related EDC FY 2011 Business Plan Objectives</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Capital Pipeline</i>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilize the Incentive Fund as a potential source for Proof of Concept projects in target platforms</li> <li>▪ Strengthen connections with capital networks and alliances with equity funds:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Sarasota Chapter of the Gulf Coast Venture Forum</li> <li>• Market the Tamiami Angel Fund to local investors</li> <li>• Strengthen ties with the Florida Venture Forum</li> <li>• Monitor developments of Venture Capital Funds in the state</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

| Infrastructure Elements   | Related EDC FY 2011 Business Plan Objectives   |
|---|--|
| <i>Business Acceleration Support and Entrepreneurship Development</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a regional innovation center (incubator) with USF as the lead partner               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with other incubator resources (e.g. the HUB, Newtown Incubator, North Port Incubator, IntegraClick, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <i>Intellectual Property (IP) Commercialization</i>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seek commercialization opportunities for companies through relationships with universities</li> <li>▪ Strengthen connections with research institutions</li> <li>▪ Foster commercialization and technology transfer opportunities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match corporate IP with local companies</li> <li>• Build relationships with Florida High Tech Corridor Tech Transfer Officers</li> <li>• Watch for commercialization opportunities through New College, Ringling, and USF</li> <li>• Conduct Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| <i>Business Attraction, Retention, and Expansion</i>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhance business assistance programs and services:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major employer visits</li> <li>• Implement Economic Gardening program</li> <li>• Provide information workshops for companies</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Aggressively recruit companies in target platforms</li> <li>▪ Enhance company communication programs</li> <li>▪ Continue key recognition programs (Hall of Fame; Industry Tour)</li> <li>▪ Target workforce programs to enhance skills in targeted industry sectors</li> <li>▪ Continue to develop locally controlled incentives</li> <li>▪ Create a leading edge international business development program               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an international trade mission</li> <li>• Complete a database of companies that do international trade</li> <li>• CEO Forum for companies in international trade</li> <li>• Understand Port Manatee resources</li> <li>• Enhance international trade education and training programs for companies</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

| Infrastructure Elements                 | Related EDC FY 2011 Business Plan Objectives  |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hire a Research Manager to conduct research and analysis of market platform industries</li> <li>▪ Support a strong film and entertainment program</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Peer Networks</i>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hold regular CEO Forums and Roundtables (CEO Forum; Peerspectives; Green Drinks, etc.)</li> </ul>  |
| <i>Regional and State Collaboration</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lead and manage the Partners Council</li> <li>▪ Continue collaborative affiliations with Manatee County, the Tampa Bay Partnership, and the Southwest Florida Economic Development Partnership</li> <li>▪ Strengthen local company connections with entrepreneur resources, such as the Florida High Tech Corridor, Tampa Bay Technology Forum, and Suncoast Technology Forum</li> </ul> |

GUD strongly supports these objectives to begin developing a more formalized business development infrastructure and recognizes that significant progress is being made, particularly in the area of developing a well staffed, coherent, systematized approach to business attraction.

To complement this effort, GUD recommends development of a more formalized regional Business Development Network to organize a “pipeline” of entrepreneurial enterprises – both existing companies and start-ups – in the region and to assist in attracting new ventures to the region.

Implementing a Regional Business Development Network

The implementation details for this recommendation are summarized below.

- **Partnership.** The Network could be launched as a partnership between the County, the Sarasota EDC, and, potentially, one or more other parties. (Eventual participation by the Manatee EDC would be highly recommended to give it a regional scope.)
- **Private sector leadership.** It is critical that the Network be designed with input and support from key private sector leaders in the community who have business start-up, investment, and growth experience, and who know the private sector networks and resources that are relevant to this work. GUD recommends assembling a Design Team for the Network consisting of 10-12

individuals who fit this description, and who would be supported by County, EDC, and other staff resources.

- **Working Groups on key network functions.** The Design Team, with staff assistance, should assemble Working Groups to flesh out the details for each of the primary functions of the Business Development Network, including:

- *Organizing a more formalized investment capital pipeline.* A serious regional development system involves structured deal flow relationships between angel/seed investors, venture capitalists, mezzanine capital, private equity, and conventional debt capital.

As the players get used to interacting with each other, they develop common standards on due diligence, business plan formats, and hurdle rates, which get communicated to entrepreneurs so that they know what the investor expectations are and they can plan for it.<sup>14</sup>

Identification, encouragement, and coordination of these assets in the Sarasota County region, and building working relationships between them should, over time, constitute a coordinated “deal flow” pipeline. If successful, this will help put Sarasota County on the national venture capital map and also catalyze the formation of new angel, seed, and venture capital funds in the region.

- *Developing a more robust business incubation/acceleration system.* Business acceleration involves the intentional organizing of resources around an entrepreneurial/management team to accelerate business growth. The most promising examples in the County are private sector initiatives such as the Hub and the IntegraClick business incubators.

A more formalized larger scale business acceleration system for differentiating the needs of companies by type of company and the business resources available to them can lead to the creation of business services support systems for companies that investors have confidence in. This will, in turn, help this capacity evolve over time.

- *Organizing business advisors for entrepreneurs.* Sarasota has an extraordinary depth of senior business executive experience in its retiree (or ‘Neveretiree’) community. As one interviewee noted: “We were able to put together a world class board in preparation for a potential IPO event – without having to recruit anyone from outside of Sarasota County. There are just not many mid-sized metropolitan communities where you

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<sup>14</sup> The JumpStart program in Cleveland is a terrific example of this (although admittedly on a scale that is unlikely to happen in Sarasota.) Using a dedicated seed fund and high levels of focused entrepreneur assistance, they have built a “regional innovation system” that has brought more than \$500 million of new venture capital to the region. See [www.jumpstartinc.org](http://www.jumpstartinc.org) for more information.

could do that.” One function of the Design Team will be to figure out how to organize this talent pool to support promising entrepreneurs in a more systematic way. (One idea, for instance, would be to develop a network of former executives who would be willing to serve in an advisory capacity to entrepreneurial companies – a “Rent a Board” function.)

- *Establishing more proactive IP commercialization efforts.* Intellectual property (IP) commercialization rarely happens from simply establishing relationships with potential IP sources. It usually requires a very proactive strategy that is able to reach into IP sources, scan and catalogue their IP, organize transactions with private companies, and help companies negotiate intellectual property relationships. These kinds of activities are best done when there is a clear technology or market niche focus.<sup>15</sup>
- *Undertaking targeted entrepreneur attraction.* The Network can play a role in attracting second and third career entrepreneurs to the Sarasota region by working through existing social networks. As was articulated in Section IV, the GUD team believes that Sarasota County has a unique opportunity to leverage its attractiveness as a retirement community to attract entrepreneurs from the “Neveretiree” community – 50 to 80 year olds who are interested in pursuing a second or third career as an entrepreneur while establishing a home base in their retirement location.<sup>16</sup> GUD has provided a detailed set of recommendations on how to take advantage of this opportunity in the attachment: *Attracting and Retaining 50-80 Year Old Green Talent*.

One element of targeted entrepreneur attraction that should be considered is an “Entrepreneur Concierge” service to introduce potential entrepreneurs to the region. The Concierge would be staffed by volunteers who provide a personalized introduction to the business and government resources and the environmental and social amenities of the region, as well as introductions to other entrepreneurs who can provide a personal perspective on the region as a good place to grow a business.

- **Focus on Clean Tech and Green Businesses.** The Business Development Network can encourage Clean Tech businesses. GUD, in collaboration with the EDC, has been able to identify more than 60 Clean Tech businesses

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<sup>15</sup> The work of the Global Midwest Alliance is a good example of this kind of proactive approach. They work directly with labs like Argonne; scan and categorize their IP (so they form their own judgment about how useful it is); and then broker meetings with companies and investors to accelerate commercialization.

<sup>16</sup> The Kauffman Foundation’s May 2010 *Index of Entrepreneurial Activity, 1996-2009*, found that across the entire U.S. population, the highest rate of entrepreneurship since 2007 is among the 55-64 age group. People older than 55 were on average twice as likely to create successful new companies than were younger entrepreneurs between the ages of 20 and 34.

currently located in Sarasota County. However, it does not make sense to set up the infrastructure involved in a Business Development Network and then restrict it to serving only Clean Tech Businesses. Any Green Business and any business prepared to become a Green Business should be able to take advantage of the Business Development Network.

- **Staff with private sector expertise.** Initial support for the design of the Business Development Network can be provided by GUD team members who have extensive experience in these content areas. Over time, the Network will require dedicated staff who have enough private sector credentials to gain the trust and respect of the entrepreneurs and investors they are working with.
- **Think regionally.** Economic development is an inherently regional function. Markets and private sector companies think and act on the basis of regional economies and labor markets. Political jurisdictions are not very relevant to their businesses, except in the manner in which they create variation in regulatory compliance and incentives. Sarasota County is competing against other regions – the East Coast, West Coast, Miami, etc. – not against Manatee County. The GUD team fully agrees with the sentiment expressed in Sarasota County Administrator Jim Ley’s recent “Musings”:

*“Regardless of the reason, Sarasota County and Manatee County are clearly viewed by the outside world and most of the local world as one economy. Other than those who use our processes (permits, land use, etc) there may be less than 100 non-government people in the two counties that even recognize the difference. Our economies, workforce and transportation are linked as if one community. This close alignment suggests that if either economy improves, all benefit in meaningful ways (employment, property taxes, sales tax, etc). There is a growing recognition that our competition is not among ourselves but it is with other economic communities like the Tampa Bay, or the Lee/Collier region. If that is so, is it time for an even closer alignment of our regional economic development efforts?”*

The Business Development Network needs to be a genuinely *regional* network that works across organizational silos.



## Targeted Business Retention and Attraction

A Business Development Network needs to be supported by a robust business attraction and retention strategy. Sarasota County has not had a historically strong business attraction strategy. The new EDC strategic plan is focused on making improvements in this area, including:

- **Increasing presence in the business attraction marketplace.** The GUD team noted, for instance, that Sarasota County has a weak presence in some of the core site selection publications and organizations.<sup>17</sup>
- **Identifying specific sectors for attraction and getting embedded in the relevant networks for those sectors.** Business attraction and retention generates the best results when it is highly targeted to different types of firms that allow the economic development professionals to build knowledge, competence, and relationships in the sector. This competence has to be built over time and requires a specialized kind of staff expertise.<sup>18</sup> It requires a focused approach, and deep engagement in the networks of the targeted firms – including their trade shows, industry associations, relevant professional organizations, investor networks, etc. In addition to Clean Tech, logical sectors where Sarasota County already has strength include health care and digital media and arts.

Significant progress is being made now in business attraction. The EDC has hired a new Executive Vice President with specific business attraction responsibilities. The EDC is implementing a new systematized approach to business attraction and realizing some early successes, such as the attraction of Sanborn Studios to Lakewood Ranch.

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<sup>17</sup> For instance, the May 2010 issue of *Site Selection Magazine* published its Annual Guide to economic development organizations. Sarasota County is not listed, despite 29 other entries for the State of Florida. In addition, Sarasota County does not participate in CoreNet Global, the leading association for corporate real estate professionals.

<sup>18</sup> The experience with regions recruiting companies from specific industries and regions (e.g. Japanese automotive suppliers) is a good example of this. Major company location announcements were often preceded by a decade or more of relationship building – often involving annual trips to Japan – that built confidence in the locating customer.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2 – EXPAND THE GREEN BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP**

### ***Recommendation Summary:***

- *Expand the marketing and the staffing of the Green Business Partnership.*
- *Set the goal of becoming the county with the highest per capita rate of certified Green Businesses in the nation.*
- *Develop a robust set of follow-on activities for businesses that receive Green Business certification.*
- *Use this Network to promote joint ventures, business-to-business (B-B) and business-to-consumer (B-C) transactions, and advanced assistance to save more money.*
- *Encourage the initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses.*

Sarasota County has the opportunity to expand and strengthen its successful Green Business Partnership, which has provided Green Business certification to 128 Sarasota County businesses. (A more extensive discussion of this recommendation is included in the Attachment: *Green Business Partnership Expansion*.) The Sarasota County Green Business Partnership is one of the leading Green Business Certification Programs in the United States and has been replicated in other counties, yet it operates with one half-time staff person.

With additional resources and a more aggressive marketing strategy, the Green Business Partnership could expand to include a much larger percentage of the 14,000 businesses in Sarasota County. Also, a comprehensive post-certification program could be implemented, including:

- Formation of a Green Business Network.
- Promotion of additional business activity – both business to consumer (B-C) and business to business (B-B) – for certified Green Businesses.
- Provision of advanced assistance to save additional money and resources.
- Establishment of a business assistance program for Green Businesses.

A significant expansion of the Green Business Partnership could be accomplished at modest cost by making the position of Coordinator full-time and by adding two additional staff. The Coordinator of the Green Business Partnership projects that this expansion could produce at least 20 certifications per month – 240 per

year. Any downtime in relation to certification could be used to promote the Green Business Partnership and to build the Green Business Network and other post-certification activities.

Through expansion of the Green Business Partnership, Sarasota County will be in position to maintain and publicize its position as the county with the largest number of Certified Green Businesses, per capita, in the nation.

An expanded and strengthened Green Business Partnership would make a significant contribution to building a Sustainable Economy in Sarasota County by:

- Saving a much larger amount of money and resources.
- Preventing pollution on a much more significant scale.
- Stimulating the Sarasota County market for the products and services of local Clean Tech Businesses.
- Assisting in diversifying the Sarasota County economy without adversely impacting the Sarasota County environment and quality of life.

Implementing an Expanded Green Business Partnership

To accomplish these goals, GUD recommends nine specific steps:

1. **Increase Staffing.** Increase the staffing of the Green Business Partnership, with staff promoting the program and encouraging post-certification activities when they are not doing certifications.
2. **Set Targets.** Formulate a target for the number of businesses certified per year and aggressively promote the Green Business Partnership to reach that target.
3. **On-Line Option.** Enhance the on-line dimension of Green Business Certification.
4. **Develop Measurement Metrics.** Identify and implement metrics for resources and dollars saved and pollution prevented through Green Business Certification.
5. **Promote Green Businesses.** Promote the Sarasota County Green Map and other ways to encourage consumers to patronize Certified Green Businesses.
6. **Create a Green Business Network.** Constitute a post-certification program for Green Businesses – in the form of a Green Business Network – perhaps in

association with the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce's Green Business Leadership Council.

7. **Encourage Green B-B Business.** Encourage Green B-B (business to business) transactions through the Green Business Network, government purchasing programs, and other means.
8. **Advanced Program.** Establish an advanced program to save additional money and resources.
9. **Green Business Attraction.** Implement a program for encouraging initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses in Sarasota County.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3 – ESTABLISH A CLEAN TECH SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### ***Recommendation Summary:***

- *Develop an inventory of Clean Technology (“Clean Tech”) companies, and update the inventory on an annual basis.*
- *Initiate and staff a Sarasota County Clean Tech Network including Clean Tech firms, investors, utilities, service providers, academic institutions, and economic development organizations.*
- *Launch sub-sector networks in promising market segments, including Green Construction, Water Technology, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Agriculture, and Aquaculture.*
- *Develop a strategic relationship between the Network and the Ringling College of Art and Design to link local companies to faculty and student talent.*

Attracting and growing Clean Technology companies is one way to diversify Sarasota County’s economic base in a way that leverages the region’s environmental and sustainability heritage as a vehicle for economic prosperity. This section makes recommendations that support this outcome.

The GUD team reviewed company lists, conducted secondary Internet research, and did more than 30 interviews to identify the existing Clean Tech sub-clusters in Sarasota County. In this process, the GUD team used a taxonomy for defining Clean Tech companies. Details of this taxonomy are in the attachment: *Green Economy Classification System*. The list of companies in Sarasota County that were identified as falling into these categories is included in the attachment: *Inventory of Sarasota County Clean Technology Companies and Organizations*.

Through this analysis and the 30+ interviews conducted with Clean Tech Company CEOs and management, it became clear that Sarasota County does not have a critical mass of competitive, export-oriented Clean Tech sub-clusters at this stage of its development. Therefore, it makes sense to focus on the Clean Tech sector as a whole, rather than discrete sub-sectors.

A traditional approach to cluster development assumes that a region has a critical mass of firms engaged in a common market that forms the basis for a cluster and sub-cluster analysis. The cluster development strategy then typically involves the following steps:

1. Mapping of the firms and related support infrastructure in the cluster and relevant sub-clusters – including the networks of relationships between them.
2. Benchmarking potential clusters/sub-clusters against leading clusters /sub-clusters elsewhere and identifying areas of differentiation.
3. Building networks of cluster/sub-cluster leaders to:
  - Encourage knowledge and idea exchange and cross fertilization.
  - Support collaborative research and development (R&D).
  - Build business relationships.
  - Understand the need for specialized support and inputs.
4. Investing in specialized R&D assets that support cluster/sub-cluster innovation and connecting clusters to existing R&D assets.
5. Organizing access to specialized capital resources for cluster/sub-cluster investment.
6. Recruiting companies that fill cluster/sub-cluster gaps.
7. Supporting firm spin-offs and entrepreneurial start-ups.
8. Supporting demand for cluster/sub-cluster products and services through:
  - Local and state policies and incentives.
  - Local investments, including infrastructure.
  - Development of common industry standards (e.g. product certifications).
  - Consumer mobilization and behavior change.
9. Organizing cluster/sub-cluster suppliers.
10. Organizing cluster talent providers.
11. Marketing and branding cluster differentiation.

Since the County does not have a critical mass of firms in any one Clean Tech sub-segment around which to organize a cluster development strategy, it makes sense to focus the Clean Tech business development at the broader level of the entire class of companies, rather than one or more specialized sub-sets. Over time, this approach will likely lead to some differentiated market segments, around which to initiate a focused sub-cluster strategy.

## Clusters to Track for Potential Development

It is important to remember that clusters often develop in their early stages around a relatively small number of companies. There are some intriguing market segments that warrant deeper understanding, cultivation, and attention, even at this stage. Many of these have been identified and are being explored by the EDC Sustainable Systems Platform team. They include:

- **Green Construction.** Sarasota County has a significant collection of green building companies that likely have opportunities for more exporting (vs. just producing for local consumption). Currently, it appears that most of these companies are oriented towards serving the local market as opposed to exporting products and services to other markets. Deeper network analysis is warranted in many of the broader opportunities related to green construction. Three specific opportunities of note include:
  - **Sub-tropical integrated retrofits.** Companies like DwellGreen are advancing a uniquely “Florida” approach to retrofitting that stresses an integrated approach to energy efficiency, hurricane hardening, water conservation, and quality of life (including aging in place). This is a specialized niche that has relevance to other coastal sub-tropical communities in the Southeastern U.S., and into the Caribbean market. Sarasota County could demonstrate these innovative methods through the Florida House Learning Center, and potentially integrate them into the Get Energy Smart Retrofit Program.
  - **Innovative building systems and components.** There are a number of companies focused on green building systems and components in Sarasota County. Again, these have not yet risen to the level of a “sub-cluster”, but there is definite promise for export-related synergies and market building.
  - **Greening of homeowner and condominium associations.** The Turtle Rock homeowners association on Palmer Ranch has demonstrated the potential for a high return on investment (ROI) on energy efficiency related to homeowner associations and condominium associations.<sup>19</sup> This is a large market nationally that no one has yet effectively developed a strategy for penetrating. The County should nurture this experiment and test out its potential for scaling up. One strategy could be to explore the interest of relevant Clean Tech companies in addressing this market and

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<sup>19</sup> At Turtle Rock, the homeowners association helped save considerable annual operating costs by replacing their incandescent street lamps powered by natural gas with solar-powered LED lights, and switching the temperature controls on the subdivision’s community swimming pool from natural gas to geothermal heating from a nearby pond.

then organizing a meeting of Clean Tech companies and interested condominium associations.

- **Water technology.** Significant national and international research has been conducted demonstrating that management of and access to fresh water is going to create increasingly large market opportunities. Sarasota County has some assets that could connect it more closely to this opportunity, but they would need to be more effectively leveraged. Sarasota County is a leader in the integrated water management movement. In addition, the County is home to several manufacturing companies (Crane, BIFS Technologies, and Harn RO) that are clearly in this space. In addition, Sarasota County has the good fortune to be home to Bunker Hill Capital's water systems practice group (represented by Don Borden), a major private equity player in the water equipment and systems space. Given the region's advanced practice in water management, the cultivation of this sector is worth thinking about more deeply.
- **Specialized Agriculture.** There are several companies with technologies linked to bio-remediation and specialized agricultural products and services, such as Biological Tree Services, Florikan, and Osprey Biotechnics. At this point, they do not appear to have any common technology, market, or intellectual property characteristics that would make a sub-cluster strategy immediately relevant, but in the longer term this area could evolve into a viable sub-cluster.
- **Renewable energy.** Despite the fact that it is the "Sunshine State", Florida has largely missed out on an opportunity to be a significant player in the emerging solar industry. The State policy environment has not been consistently conducive to the solar industry (compared, for instance, to California and Massachusetts) leading to a loss of investor confidence in the sector. Despite this fact, there are a number of leading alternative energy companies located in Sarasota County, such as Sunovia and WES Industries who sell products and services outside of the state, along with a robust network of local solar sales and installation firms. Several have potentially innovative business models and designs that could lead to scalable market growth. In addition, Sarasota County is home to Cruise Cars, a rapidly growing manufacturer of solar-powered golf carts and other low-speed electric vehicles for campus transportation systems.
- **Aquaculture as an R&D niche.** The Sustainable Systems Platform team emerging out of the EDC Strategic Plan has already done a large amount of work thinking through the opportunities for Sarasota County to be a national



center for aquaculture research and development (R&D). This appears to be an R&D initiative, rather than business cluster development, since clear proof of concept on commercialization has not yet been demonstrated. However, there are likely opportunities to attract R&D resources that build upon the capabilities of Mote Marine Laboratory and University of South Florida.

Sarasota County does have a promising set of early stage high growth companies that have managed the start-up process without a business development infrastructure to support them. Many, but not all, of these companies fall into one or more of the Clean Tech segment categories. The characteristics of these companies tell us something about how to market the region as a place for companies to start and grow, and how to customize the business development infrastructure to support them.

When the GUD team interviewed entrepreneurs, a common pattern emerged:

- **Attracted by quality of life.** The entrepreneurs are located in Sarasota County because of the quality of life – not because of factors related to the market dynamics of their business. In other words, they chose to live in Sarasota County first, and then decided to build a business here – rather than starting a business and then deciding to locate it in Sarasota County because of proximity to customers, key suppliers, labor inputs, and other competitive factors.
- **Not a business friendly climate in the past.** Almost all of these entrepreneurs have found, in the past, the County to be a “difficult” place to do business, in the sense that regulatory and support systems of government are not organized well to meet their needs – and often seem to be working against them, not for them. Despite this, they still decide to stay in the County.
- **Utilized local networks and expertise.** They all negotiated the requirements for a business start-up (start-up and growth capital, market intelligence, business partners and management team, advisors, business space, etc.) pretty much on their own, often relying on their personal networks. Many said they found the abundance of retired business talent in the County to be a big plus that allowed them to get very high quality advisory services on a volunteer basis or for a very reasonable price.
- **Serial entrepreneurs.** Many are “serial entrepreneurs” – and their current enterprise is one in a string of companies they have built.
- **Strong sustainability values.** Many have very strong values around sustainability, and they believe that encouraging the growth of businesses

like theirs is entirely compatible with the quality of life goals of the County – and that in fact preserving this quality of life (high quality natural environment, good arts and culture, strong civic institutions, vibrant downtown) is critical to their ability to attract and retain the talent that they need to grow their companies.

- **Civic commitments and inclined to collaborate.** They enjoy networking with their peers – and would welcome more opportunities to collaborate on non-competitive issues with other entrepreneurs. They tend to be very civically oriented and are willing to help make the County an attractive and welcoming place to other entrepreneurs like themselves.

### Implementing a Clean Technology Support Infrastructure

GUD recommends the following actions to implement a Clean Technology Support Infrastructure:

1. **Annual Clean Tech Inventory.** The County should develop an inventory of Clean Technology companies based on the taxonomy GUD provided that determines which companies to include. It would be good to update the Clean Tech inventory annually, if not more frequently. If developed on-line, it would be possible to get companies to manage the updating process themselves. The Inventory would be used to stay in touch with and support the clusters and sub-clusters of firms. The GUD team produced a first approximation of this inventory, which is included in the attachment: *Inventory of Sarasota County Clean Technology Companies and Organizations*. The EDC has agreed to maintain this inventory and update it. EDC staff members have already made some refinements in the process.
2. **Clean Technology Network.** The County should consider creating and staffing a Sarasota County Clean Technology Network. The purpose of this Network would be to grow the Clean Technology economy in the Sarasota County region. The members of the Network would include CEOs and other executives of Clean Tech companies, potential investors in Clean Tech companies (angel and venture funds, finance intermediaries, banks), energy and water utilities, business service providers, academic institutions, economic development organizations and Chambers of Commerce, and workforce development organizations. The activities of the Network could include:
  - An annual conference connecting national Clean Tech thought leaders, regional Clean Tech companies, and other members of the Clean Tech Network to advance the Clean Tech sector, gain wider national

recognition, identify ways to advance the sector, and encourage joint ventures and other forms of collaboration.

- A website and electronic newsletter.
- Updating and publishing of the Clean Technology Inventory.
- Public forums with national thought leaders (most likely organized by sub-sectors).
- Membership in the national Clean Tech Network.
- Generation of recommendations to the County on how the County, the cities, educational institutions, and others can support the growth of the Clean Tech Cluster in Sarasota County.
- Organizing of sub-networks in specific market areas.
- Creation of a robust inventory of public and private sources of potential intellectual property commercialization related to specific sub-sectors.
- Coordination with the Green Business Partnership to encourage all Clean Tech Businesses to become Certified Green Businesses.

3. **Sub-Sector Networks.** Under the umbrella of the Clean Technology Network, it is recommended that the County organize sub-networks of firms and support organizations focused on some of the more promising market segments with potential for growth (e.g. Green Construction, Water Technology, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Agriculture, and Aquaculture). Each Sub-Sector Network would:

- Develop a robust inventory of related companies in the Sarasota County region.
- Identify business development and business attraction opportunities for the region.
- Assist firms to make links to sources of growth capital.
- Help firms make links to sources of potential intellectual property.
- Organize specialized information forums on the sub-sector, including inviting national experts to make presentations in Sarasota County.
- Connect the local network to national networks of practitioners.

4. **Collaboration with the Ringling College of Art and Design.** The location of the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota County presents a significant opportunity to bring leading edge design support to Clean

Technology companies in Sarasota County. A specific initiative of the Clean Technology Network should be to organize strategic relationships between Ringling faculty and students and the local Clean Tech community. (The proposed Ringling “Cauldron,” to encourage application of good design in local businesses, organizations, and institutions, could be one example of this kind of collaboration.)

## **RECOMMENDATION 4 – LAUNCH A GREEN ENERGY AND RESOURCE RECOVERY PARK AT THE SARASOTA COUNTY CENTRAL LANDFILL**

### ***Recommendation Summary:***

- Create a Green Energy Park at the Landfill that is a center for green energy production.
- Generate energy from a mix of photovoltaic, solar thermal, methane gas, wind, geothermal, biomass and biofuels, and emission-free waste-to-energy as appropriate.
- Sell energy at a discount to EEZ residences and businesses.
- Establish a “waste to wealth” Resource Recovery Park at the Landfill for businesses that use the Landfill waste stream as a source of raw material inputs to production.
- Co-locate recycling, reuse, compost processing, manufacturing, and retail businesses.

The Sarasota County Central Solid Waste Disposal Complex (Landfill) is one centerpiece of the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ).<sup>20</sup> 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.

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<sup>20</sup> The GUD team’s detailed recommendations for EEZ development are included in Attachment 8: *Energy Economic Zone Concept Paper*.

- Emission-free waste-to-energy. (Although this emission-free waste burning technology appears quite promising, it may not be feasible because it would require a charter change.)
- 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 that has been initially explored 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:

- Assessing the preliminary viability of various sites for energy generation.
- Recommending potential green energy technologies for feasibility assessment for those sites.
- 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 5 – INNOVATE ECO-SMART DEVELOPMENT IN THE ENERGY ECONOMIC ZONE (EEZ) AS WELL AS ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTY**

### ***Recommendation Summary:***

- Make Eco-Smart Development a key organizing concept for the EEZ and elsewhere in the County.
- Utilize the Five types of Eco-Smart Development: Eco-Smart Villages; Eco-Smart Town Centers; Green Energy/Resource Recovery Parks; Green Business Parks; and Green Shopping Centers.
- Expand the EEZ to include other areas.
- Implement incentives for Eco-Smart Development and Clean Tech/Green Business in the EEZ.
- Encourage EEZ development with business support services, and aggressive communications and marketing.

Part of the Sarasota County contract with GUD has been to recommend an economic concept to guide design and development of the Energy Economic Zone (EEZ).

GUD is proposing Eco-Smart Development – an approach to development that integrates a wide variety of Sustainable Economic Development best practices and utilizes LEED certification – as the guiding economic concept for the EEZ. (See the Attachment: *Eco-Smart Development: An Economic Concept to Guide Development in the Energy Economic Zone and Elsewhere in Sarasota County.*)

GUD believes that this concept has broad applicability outside of the EEZ, and can establish a “brand” of sustainable real estate development that differentiates Sarasota County from other U.S. communities.

There are five basic types of Eco-Smart Development: Eco-Smart Villages, Eco-Smart Town Centers, Green Energy/Resource Recovery 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 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 large-scale real estate development. Therefore the GUD

recommendations include ways to expand and modify the current concept in order to obtain more rapid economic benefits.

### The Eco-Smart Development Concept

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, this concept can be applied much more broadly.

Eco-Smart Development integrates:

- Green energy generation, featuring solar photovoltaic (PV), solar thermal, wind, geothermal, and biomass.
- Multi-modal transportation 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.
- Low-impact development that features retention of native vegetation, soils, rainwater harvesting, pervious pavement, and bio-retention.
- Greenhouse gas reduction policies that encourage renewable energy generation, promote energy conservation and efficiency strategies, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 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.
- 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 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, healthy, and productive of a high quality of life.
- Bio-regional development connecting local organic agriculture with urban consumption.

- Development that meets a set of objective standards such as the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.
- Hurricane-hardened buildings able to withstand winds of up to 120 mph.

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 business development. A number of studies suggest that development done well, using LEED standards, can have a good return on investment and be as profitable as or even more profitable than older types of development. (See the Attachment *Eco-Smart Development: An Economic Concept to Guide Development in the Energy Economic Zone and Elsewhere in Sarasota County* for a more extensive discussion of this topic.)

As conceived by GUD, there are five basic types of Eco-Smart Development:

1. ***Eco-Smart Villages***: mixed-use neighborhoods that are human-scale, walkable, and combine residential with neighborhood-serving retail and commercial.
2. ***Eco-Smart Town Centers***: places combining government and civic uses with recreation, lifestyle, culture, arts, education, entertainment, and lodging uses.
3. ***Green Energy/Resource Recovery Parks***: featuring:
  - 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.
  - Co-location in a central facility of:
    - Reuse.
    - Recycling.
    - Compost processing.
    - Manufacturing using landfill materials.
    - Retail businesses.

4. **Green Business Parks:** larger scale employment centers that integrate research and development, light manufacturing, and office uses for Clean Tech and Green Businesses, linked by multi-modal transportation, with significant environmental amenities.
5. **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 Developments, 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. developments that feature: ecological preservation; smart, mixed use, low-impact development; multimodal transportation; green energy and resource efficiency; a bio-regional orientation; all working together to produce livable communities.)

#### Implementing the Eco-Smart Development Concept

The GUD team makes the following recommendations for implementing the Eco-Smart Development concept in Sarasota County:

- **As part of the EEZ design.** The Eco-Smart Development concept can be central to the EEZ design. Specifically:
  - Establish a Green Energy and Resource Recovery Park at the Central Landfill. (See Recommendation 4 – Launch a Green Energy and Resource Recovery Park.)
  - Develop an Eco-Smart Village, Green Shopping Center, or some combination at the SDC Communities site in the EEZ.
  - To increase the Clean Tech and Green Business development and employment potential of the EEZ and to establish a shorter time horizon for project outcomes, expand the EEZ boundaries to encompass a pre-existing business park and establish a Green Business Park.
  - Explore other expansions of the EEZ to include an Eco-Smart Town Center, perhaps in association with an Eco-Smart Village and/or a Green Shopping Center.
  - Constitute a multi-modal sustainable transportation system for the EEZ, featuring walking, biking, electric vehicles, and efficient transportation infrastructure.

- **On a countywide basis.** Sarasota County has an opportunity to create an Eco-Smart Development “brand” to distinguish itself as a best practice location for sustainable real estate development. To take advantage of this opportunity, the County could:
  - Create definitions and standards specific to each type of Eco-Smart Development.
  - Develop a set of incentives to encourage Eco-Smart Development.
  - Integrate the concept of Eco-Smart Development into its Comprehensive Plan.
  - Benchmark against other communities that have specialized in Green Development to determine how the County can best establish its thought and practice leadership in this newly emerging dynamic marketplace.

#### Incentives for the EEZ

EEZ incentives are discussed in detail in the Attachment: *Matrix of Economic Development Incentives for the Sarasota County Energy Economic Zone (Matrix of EEZ Incentives)*. The *Matrix of EEZ Incentives* is divided into five sections: Florida State Incentives; Sarasota County EEZ Incentives; EEZ Marketing Incentives; EEZ Physical and Location Incentives; and suggestions for Florida State legislation.

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 in Life Cycle Cost analysis, 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.

Direct subsidies, business support services, business climate, and quality of life are areas that local governments can influence. The last criterion, quality of life, is the area where Sarasota County has been particularly successful. Since Sarasota County competes with other Florida and East Coast communities that also are desirable places to live, Sarasota County has to be competitive in other incentives and in marketing the advantages of Sarasota.

GUD compared the incentives available in Sarasota County and the State of Florida to 18 comparable regions and communities, including:

- Tampa area.
- Jacksonville area.
- State of Georgia.
- Atlanta area.
- State of South Carolina.
- Charleston area.
- State of North Carolina.
- Charlotte area.
- Research Triangle in North Carolina.
- State of Texas.
- Houston area.
- Austin area.
- Fort Worth area.
- State of California.
- San Jose area.
- San Diego area.
- Irvine area.
- Riverside area.

GUD found that the combined incentives available from the State of Florida, Sarasota County, and cities within Sarasota County are competitive with those available from adjoining states and communities. Incentives available in Sarasota County are also competitive with communities rated successful in economic development.

Pursuing a package of Florida State incentives for the EEZ is integral to the EEZ's success. State incentives can be combined with County incentives and effective marketing to make a strong case for locating in the EEZ. State action would be very helpful to allow the EEZ to offer all of the incentives that an Enterprise Zone in Florida can offer, including:

- Jobs Tax Credit (Sales and Use Tax).
- Sales Tax Exemption for Electrical Energy.
- Business Equipment or Property Sales Tax Refund.
- Sales Tax Refund.
- Jobs Tax Credit (Corporate Income Tax Credit).
- Property Tax Credit.
- Community Contribution Tax Credit.

## **RECOMMENDATION 6 – ORGANIZE A GREEN TALENT RESPONSE SYSTEM**

### **Recommendation Summary:**

- Respond to entry and mid-skill green employment on a “Just-in-Time” not a “Just-in-Case” basis.
- Work with Suncoast Workforce and CareerEdge to evolve a career pathways approach to Green Talent.
- Encourage Sarasota County-based green career degree and credentialing programs, e.g. State College of Florida’s degree in Energy Technology Management.
- Focus at the level of green entrepreneurial and managerial capacity as well as entry level green jobs.

To formulate recommendations in relation to Green Talent, the GUD team engaged in three efforts:

1. A formulation of green careers in the context of the green economy and definitions of “green jobs” and “green talent” in *Green Economy Classification System* (included as an attachment).
2. A review of the key workforce development assets in the County.
3. Assessment of the demand for Green Talent.

The overall GUD assessment can be summarized in the following points:

- The County has many elements of a robust workforce development infrastructure that is capable of responding rapidly to green employment demand when that demand emerges.
- Several education and training institutions are being proactive in developing new occupational certifications related to green skills and careers.
- The current level of demand is not high enough to warrant special investments in new training capacity at this time.



## Defining a Green Talent System

GUD has defined the purpose of a Green Talent system as:

*To stimulate the creation of the trained and job-ready green workforce and the well-educated green entrepreneurial and managerial capacity needed to power the transformation to a sustainable economy.*

A Green Talent system builds “social capital” to support green economy development by aligning the skill needs of the marketplace with talent suppliers through well-defined career pathways.

## Defining Green Talent<sup>21</sup>

There is no standard definition for what constitutes a green job. WorkForce Florida’s definition is a good broad definition:

*“A green job increases the conservation and sustainability of natural resources for the benefit of Floridians. This includes jobs that reduce energy usage or lower carbon emissions, and protect Florida’s natural resources. Green jobs should provide worker-friendly conditions, pay sustainable wages, and offer opportunities for continued skill training and career growth.”*

The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (known as O\*Net) additionally differentiates between three kinds of “green jobs”:

- **Increased Demand Jobs** – Existing occupational categories that are likely to experience growth because of increased demand for green products and services. These jobs typically don’t require a new set of skills. (An example is a machinist who works in a metal forming company that shifts to making parts for wind turbines.)
- **Enhanced Skills** – Occupations that will require a new set of skills to accommodate the requirements of green markets. (An example would be automotive service technicians who need to learn new skills to maintain electric vehicles.)
- **New and Emerging Occupations** – New occupational categories created by the development of new markets and new firms. (An example would be

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<sup>21</sup> A summary definition of “green talent” is included in the Attachment: *Green Economy Classification System*.

Biofuels Production Managers – individuals who manage operations at biofuels power generation facilities.)

Most of these definitions are focused on “green producers” – businesses that produce an environmental product and/or service – meaning a product or service that conserves energy or other natural resources, and/or reduces pollution.

Another important dimension of the green economy that is not encompassed in these definitions are individuals who directly carry out or support efforts within companies, government agencies, institutions, or non-profits to improve their sustainability performance, whether or not the companies are “green producers.”

The Green Economy has not yet evolved far enough in Sarasota County to allow for the establishment of a Green Talent System. Workforce development experience has shown that a “Just in Time” workforce training system works much better than a “Just in Case” system.

With a “Just in Time” system, workers are not trained for jobs that do not exist now and will not exist in the relatively near future. Many communities have prematurely invested in green skills development before practical demand exists. This not only wastes resources, but also demoralizes workers who invest in skill development and then are unable to find a job in their newly chosen career.

Sarasota County is fortunate to have many of the elements in place to move nimbly to create a Green Talent System when it is warranted by the growth of Clean Tech and Green Businesses with the resulting need for an appropriately educated and trained workforce.

For example:

- Suncoast Workforce offers the full range of workforce training and placement systems.
- State College of Florida is launching an Energy Technology Management degree program, a business incubation program, and is prepared to undertake new curriculum and programs as needed.
- University of South Florida is establishing a business incubation program and is Co-Chairing the Sustainable Systems Platform of the 5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan undertaken by the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County. Also, USF is developing new degree programs in marine science to support Sarasota County’s focus on aquaculture development.

- CareerEdge, in alliance with Suncoast and area funders, is adopting a sector-based long-term career pathways approach to workforce development.

As the Green Economy evolves in Sarasota County, the County will be able to move quickly to implement a full-scale Green Talent System. What is required will be less about providing a precise definition and classification system for green careers and more about the skill sets and training requirements needed by the particular businesses and industry sub-sectors that will emerge and thrive.

The GUD team recommends that the County initially focus its Green Talent effort at the entrepreneurial and managerial level – recruiting business owners, entrepreneurs, and their management teams to build their businesses in the region. As this effort gains success, it will create Green Talent demand at other occupational levels.

## **RECOMMENDATION 7 – FORMULATE A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

### ***Recommendation Summary:***

- Undertake brand development to position Sarasota County as a unique place for entrepreneurs to create “Prosperity in Paradise.”
- Develop a clear set of messaging themes.
- Formulate a coordinated communications plan to establish the County as a premier location for Clean Tech/Green Business and Eco-Smart Development.
- Create a common visual and graphic look across the multiple externally-facing County websites.

As part of its work with the County, Global Urban Development undertook a review and assessment of existing branding and communications initiatives and formulated the recommendations that are discussed in this section and elaborated in the Attachment: *Proposed Sarasota County Communications Plan*.

The following key points emerged from the assessment:

- The County and region do have distinctive assets that could form the basis for a differentiated brand identity with sustainability as one of its core attributes or value propositions.
- There is currently no coherent brand identity for the region that can be used to drive economic development strategy.
- The visual look and messages of key outward-facing websites (County, EDC, Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau) do not have common features (logos, tag lines, colors, etc.) that send a unified and consistent message.

GUD’s instinct is that it is entirely feasible for Sarasota County to develop a brand identity and image that is on a par with that of a community like Boulder, Colorado. Boulder has created a unique mixture of sustainability, high tech talent, venture capital<sup>22</sup>, outdoor recreation, and “funky” culture into a highly dynamic economy. Sarasota County can have the same kind of unique

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<sup>22</sup> See: To Nurture Boulder, Back-to-Basics Venture Capital

positioning, but focused on an older demographic that is attracted to sub-tropical natural amenities.

The fundamental concept for communications, branding, and marketing for Sarasota County is that the County combines being a great place to visit, live, work, and play with being a great place to grow a business. It can be characterized as, “Prosperity in Paradise.” (See the discussion of “Prosperity in Paradise” in Section IV above.)

The GUD communications recommendations for the Sarasota County messages are summarized in the following paragraphs (recognizing that this is probably not the specific language that will communicate with key audiences):

*“Sarasota County is a beautiful place, with good weather, attractive natural features – especially beaches – and many other land-based and water-based recreational opportunities, with an abundance of cultural amenities and widespread availability of professional services. It has a high quality of life.*

*The people who live, work, and play in Sarasota County believe in maintaining and enhancing its quality of life by protecting and preserving the environment. They are committed to the long-term health and sustainability of all of Sarasota County’s natural and human resources.*

*The business owners and the workforce in Sarasota County believe in sustainability. This is why Sarasota County has a significant number of dynamic, fast-growing Clean Tech companies and very successful Green Businesses. And it also is why Sarasota County has such a dynamic and highly skilled Green Talent workforce of all ages, including young adults newly graduated from college, and an especially large group of experienced professionals and entrepreneurial baby boomers and those even more senior, in the 50 to 80 year-old age range.”*

“Prosperity in Paradise” can be the brand concept, but work with a professional organization specializing in communications, branding, and marketing will be needed to develop this brand concept into a unified brand for image-making, consensus-building, and marketing Sarasota County.

## Target Audiences

There are essentially five broad audiences for Sarasota County's communications, branding, and marketing:

1. **The current community.** Focus on reaching and involving both full-time and part-time residents in getting involved as Green Entrepreneurs, Green Investors, and Green Talent in a wide range of sustainable enterprises and business activities.
2. **The existing migratory pattern.** Focus on reaching and involving people through the current Sarasota County networks of owners of second homes and visitors from Midwestern U.S. states and Canadian provinces who are especially interested in and drawn to sustainability and sustainable economic development.
3. **Neveretirees.** Focus on reaching and involving baby boomers and those more senior in age, from 50 to 80 years old, to start second (or third or fourth) careers in Sarasota County as sustainable entrepreneurs, professionals, and other paid and volunteer workers. This includes people already living in Sarasota County, as well as people who will want to relocate to Sarasota County in order to participate in the culture and take advantage of the public and private support for Clean Tech companies, Green Businesses, and Green Talent.
4. **The Young and the Restless.** Focus on retaining highly skilled young adults after they complete their studies at one of the many higher education and research institutions in Sarasota County, and on attracting youthful Green Talent from across the country and throughout the world.
5. **Clean Tech and Green Entrepreneurs and Investors.** Focus on encouraging private sector initiatives for people who currently reside in Sarasota County, as well as sustainability-oriented business and financial executives globally.

## Elements of a Communications Strategy<sup>23</sup>

The communications strategy is the vehicle through which the County and its stakeholders would formulate and market the Sarasota County brand.

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<sup>23</sup> The full details for a communications strategy are contained in the attachment, *Proposed Sarasota County Communications Plan*.

GUD recommends that the following elements be considered for this strategy:

1. Ensure that all County-related Internet websites reflect the spirit and content of the unified brand, and connect with social media to broaden the reach and appeal of the message.
2. Mobilize the current countywide public, private, and civic sustainability communications and education infrastructure to expand the message to include Sustainable Economic Development and the unified brand.
3. Utilize the current advertising and marketing budgets of public, private, and civic organizations to incorporate messages from the unified brand.
4. Establish a Sustainability News Service to identify and communicate local news and feature stories through a wide range of media and venues. This could include a Sustainability Speaker's Bureau and a Sustainability Writer's Bureau, both intended to reach local, state, national, and global audiences.
5. Collaborate with the Ringling College of Art and Design, Sanborn Studios, and many other local sources of creative talent, to produce and communicate entertainment and educational media directly related to the unified brand.
6. Organize a local cable television program featuring Green Savings and Sustainable Economic Development success stories involving residential associations as well as many other local stakeholders.
7. Expand marketing of Eco-Tourism to Sustainable Tourism, with a Sustainability Trail and a Wellness Trail that feature a wide range of sites and experiences, including aspects of the trip itself, such as Green Lodging and healthy and sustainable transportation.
8. Organize meetings, conferences, festivals, and special events in the County that highlight/promote sustainability and Sustainable Economic Development. In this context, it would be important to identify all of the Green venues in Sarasota County and to encourage any promising venues that aren't Green to become so.
9. Actively recruit organizations from outside Sarasota County to hold their sustainability and Sustainable Economic Development professional meetings, conferences, and events within Sarasota County. Examples include: the American Council on Renewable Energy; Business for Social Responsibility; and Ceres.

## SECTION VI – IMPLEMENTATION

It is the case that each of the seven recommendations discussed above stands on its own and could be implemented separately without any of the others. However, taken together, they constitute a coherent Sustainable Economic Development Strategy and they will benefit from the Sarasota County government treating them as an integrated strategy and coordinating their implementation.

Implementing the recommendations will require close coordination and collaboration with existing efforts. In creating the implementation infrastructure, it is important to avoid unnecessary confusion, overlap, and redundancy. GUD recommends the following organizational design principles to guide the implementation process:

- **It is not necessary to invest in a physical “center.”** It does not appear that a physical place (building or campus) would add value and substantially enhance the County’s Sustainable Economic Development Strategy at this time.

A physical location is important in the following kinds of situations:

- You have a large number of staff members that need to be housed in proximity to each other.
- You have specialized functions (e.g. R&D; demonstration activities) that need a specific kind of physical space.
- You need a convening location that creates continuity and “memory” from event to event.
- You need a visual symbol to create a sense of movement and identity.

None of these conditions are present yet. As a result, GUD believes that investment in physical infrastructure would be misplaced and not value-added at this time. However, as the work evolves, this situation may change and make a physical center appropriate to consider.

- **Implement through and across existing organizations.** It is important not to confuse the County’s economic development marketplace by creating new or overlapping organizations. The GUD recommendations can be implemented using the existing organizational assets in the County.

While new organizations are not needed, new resources definitely are, especially specialized staff that can work effectively with private sector leaders and know how to work through network infrastructures and alliances.



Specific staff support that does not currently exist will be necessary in order to implement these recommendations.

- **Use networks and alliances for implementation.** Networks are the appropriate organizing vehicle for many of the proposed recommendations. Networks and organizations serve different purposes and are useful for different kinds of work.

If the work you have to do is very predictable, requires stable relationships, involves a lot of proprietary information, and demands highly specialized expertise over an extended period of time, then an organization is the best vehicle.

If, on the other hand, the work is likely to change rapidly, requires a diverse set of complicated relationships, can be managed in “episodic” transactions, and involves mostly open information, then a network is often the best vehicle for this work. Networks differ from organizations in the following ways:

- They have a less formal structure and are more fluid in nature.
- Participation is voluntary.
- Participants have high levels of control over what the network does and exercise significant degrees of freedom to make choices.
- Decision-making is distributive in nature, not centralized.
- Participation is “as needed”, not full-time.
- What creates value in a network are the exchanges of connections, information, knowledge, and resources between members.
- Networks are effective where there is a high level of trust, reciprocity, and diversity between members of the network.

Networks can serve three basic kinds of functions, each of which requires a slightly different form of organization:

1. *Connecting* people to allow easy flow of and access to information and transactions.
2. *Aligning* people to develop and spread a particular identity and collective value proposition.
3. *Producing* new outputs through joint action.

Most of what GUD is recommending can be organized through network design.

- **Engage the customers in the design and implementation.** The network designs that GUD is recommending will *only* work if there are high levels of

private sector engagement, leadership, and ownership (including a certain level of governance control).

There is a subtle and difficult art to CEO engagement in this kind of work. For business executives, the work of economic development is peripheral in most instances to their daily business goals. Engaging their creativity and passion in building an economic development infrastructure that can really support wealth creation means that you have to structure the work so that it is easy and efficient for them to engage in – and so that it allows them to put their civic commitment to work for the community without asking them to take on another part-time job.

The kind of personnel who can do this work well are good facilitators, brokers, and enablers. They usually have some kind of private sector expertise so that they can see the world from the same perspective as their customers. If done right, business leaders will bring an incredible set of resources to the table – talent, money, and organizational capacity. If done poorly, meetings will have a flat and unenergetic feel, and getting folks to ‘come to the table’ will feel like pushing water up a hill.

- **Implementation details need to be developed by the social and business entrepreneurs taking the risks.** There is some level of detail that can be created for implementing these recommendations, but the reality is that, in a dynamic environment, plans need to change and adapt rapidly based on new information. There is no such thing as one group developing a strategy and handing it off to someone else to execute. The leader and team doing the implementation need to be engaged in the design. They are the only ones who can internalize the risk/reward tradeoffs and make choices about which paths to pursue. Thus the details of implementation will need a clear delineation of who are the social entrepreneurs that are going to “own” the initiatives.
- **There are many choices for an implementation design.** There are many choices the County can make in how it organizes the implementation design for these recommendations. In particular, a choice will need to be made on whether to implement through a “vertically integrated” and “top down” structure – in which most of the work is done by a single organization, with internal staff capacity – or whether to pursue a more organic approach in which certain key elements (such as the brand identity) are controlled by a central organization, but implementation of much of the work is carried out through many different loosely coordinated players.

## Key Implementation Steps

The implementation steps for each recommendation are summarized below:

| No. | Recommendation   | Implementation Actions  |
|-----|--|---|
| 1   | <i>Initiate a Business Development Network</i>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a partnership between Sarasota County, the EDC, and other parties to develop a regional Business Development Network.</li> <li>▪ Focus on establishment and growth of Clean Tech/Green companies.</li> <li>▪ Use the Network to assist second career entrepreneurs (“Neveretirees”) in Sarasota County and to recruit them to Sarasota County.</li> <li>▪ Organize a team of private sector volunteers to drive the design of the Network.</li> <li>▪ Include: a capital pipeline; business acceleration system; business advisor service; intellectual property commercialization; and an “Entrepreneur Concierge.”</li> <li>▪ Staff the Network with individuals who have private sector experience in business development.</li> </ul> |
| 2   | <i>Expand the Green Business Partnership</i>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand the marketing and the staffing of the Green Business Partnership.</li> <li>▪ Set the goal of becoming the county with the highest per capita rate of certified Green Businesses in the nation.</li> <li>▪ Develop a robust set of follow-on activities for businesses that receive Green Business certification.</li> <li>▪ Use this Network to promote joint ventures, business-to-business (B-B) and business-to-consumer (B-C) transactions, and advanced assistance to save more money.</li> <li>▪ Encourage the initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses.</li> </ul>   |
| 3   | <i>Establish a Clean Technology Support Infrastructure</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop an inventory of Clean Technology companies, and update the inventory on an annual basis.</li> <li>▪ Initiate and staff a Sarasota County Clean Technology Network including: Clean Tech firms; investors; utilities; service providers; academic institutions; and economic development organizations.</li> <li>▪ Launch sub-sector networks in promising market segments, including: Green Construction; Water Technology; Renewable Energy; Sustainable Agriculture; and Aquaculture.</li> <li>▪ Develop a strategic relationship between the Network and the Ringling College of Art and Design to link local companies to faculty and student talent.</li> </ul>   |

| No. | Recommendation  | Implementation Actions   |
|-----|---|--|
| 4   | <i>Launch a Green Energy and Resource Recovery Park</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a Green Energy Park at the Landfill that is a center for green energy production.</li> <li>▪ Generate energy from a mix of photovoltaic, solar thermal, methane gas, wind, geothermal, biomass, and emission-free waste-to-energy as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Sell energy at a discount to EEZ residences and businesses.</li> <li>▪ Establish a “waste to wealth” Resource Recovery Park at the Landfill for businesses that use the Landfill waste stream as a source of raw material inputs to production.</li> <li>▪ Co-locate recycling, reuse, compost processing, manufacturing, and retail businesses.</li> </ul> |
| 5   | <i>Innovate Eco-Smart Development</i>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make Eco-Smart Development a key organizing concept for the EEZ and elsewhere in the County.</li> <li>▪ Utilize the Five types of Eco-Smart Development: Eco-Smart Villages; Eco-Smart Town Centers; Green Energy/Resource Recovery Parks; Green Business Parks; and Green Shopping Centers.</li> <li>▪ Expand the EEZ to include other areas.</li> <li>▪ Implement incentives for Eco-Smart Development and Clean Tech/Green Business in the EEZ.</li> <li>▪ Encourage EEZ development with business support services, and aggressive communications and marketing.</li> </ul>   |
| 6   | <i>Organize a Green Talent Response System</i>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Respond to entry and mid-skill green employment on a “Just-in-Time” not a “Just-in-Case” basis.</li> <li>▪ Work with Suncoast Workforce and CareerEdge to evolve a career pathways approach to Green Talent.</li> <li>▪ Encourage Sarasota County-based green career degree and credentialing programs, e.g. State College of Florida’s degree in Energy Technology Management.</li> <li>▪ Focus at the level of green entrepreneurial and managerial capacity as well as entry level green jobs.</li> </ul>  |
| 7   | <i>Formulate a Communications Strategy</i>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake brand development to position Sarasota County as a unique place for entrepreneurs to create “Prosperity in Paradise.”</li> <li>▪ Develop a clear set of messaging themes.</li> <li>▪ Formulate a coordinated communications plan to establish the County as a premier location for Clean Tech/Green Business and Eco-Smart Development.</li> <li>▪ Create a common visual and graphic look across the multiple externally-facing County websites.</li> </ul>  |

## Implementation Priorities

There is a natural logic to the sequence of implementation.

1. A Business Development Network is a key aspect of a Clean Tech support infrastructure. The Business Development Network should come before the organization of the Clean Tech Network because the first step in encouraging expansion of the Clean Tech sector is having a robust system to assist in business development.
2. A Green Business Network flows naturally from the decision to expand and strengthen the Green Business Partnership.
3. The attraction of Clean Tech and Green Businesses to the EEZ and Eco-Smart Developments elsewhere in the County will be greatly enhanced by the establishment of the Business Development Network and the Clean Tech support infrastructure, including the Clean Tech Network, the strengthened Green Business Partnership, and the Green Business Network.
4. The Green Talent Response System will come into play, once there are a significant number of Clean Tech and Green Jobs.
5. The County needs to make progress in implementing its Sustainable Economic Development Strategy before calling attention to it through the Communications Strategy.

In addition, Sarasota County has recently begun the process of revising its Comprehensive Plan and its Sustainability Plan in association with each other. Undertaking the revision of these two plans in an integrated fashion is an important innovation. The concept of Eco-Smart Development can potentially play a significant role in this integration.

The GUD team suggests that the following three recommendations may offer the most promise as the first-tier priority for implementation:

- Creation of a Regional Business Development Network
- Establishment of the Green Energy/Resource Recovery Park at the County's Central Landfill
- Expansion of the Green Business Partnership

## Conclusion

Sarasota County can become a sub-tropical paradise with a vibrant diversified economy, powered by Neveretirees and other entrepreneurs who value the environment and quality of life. The region has the key assets needed to make “Prosperity in Paradise” a reality.

The hard work will be to align these assets around a common vision, set of messages, and implementation strategies in ways that transcend traditional boundaries and limitations that, in the past, have constrained the region’s full potential. The Global Urban Development team hopes that it has made a valuable contribution to achieving this compelling vision.