



# 2008 Annual Awards Program

## Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

**Deadline for Nominations: March 14, 2008**

Complete this form and attach to your descriptive narrative.

### SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (select only one)

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Roadmap to Sustainability

Jurisdiction where program originated: Sarasota County, Florida

Jurisdiction population: County 387,461 (unincorporated 250,858)

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2007 to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: October Year: 2006

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Richmond, Virginia, September 2008. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: James Key

Title: County Administrator Jurisdiction: Sarasota County

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of person who should be contacted with questions regarding the nomination:

Lee Hayes Byron

Title of nominator: Manager, Sustainability Jurisdiction of nominator: Sarasota County

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# International City County Management Association 2008 ICMA Annual Awards Program

*Nomination for ICMA Program Excellence Award:  
Community Sustainability  
March 14, 2008*

## The Sarasota County Roadmap to Sustainability: A Comprehensive and Transformative Guide To Building a Sustainable Community



**James Ley**  
County Administrator  
Sarasota County, FL  
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**Lee Hayes Byron**  
Sustainability Manager  
Sarasota County, FL  
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## **Introduction**

Governments have been entrusted with a responsibility that goes beyond the moment, with public administrators serving as both consumers of the present and architects of the future. They can exist to ensure basic services, or they can inspire and challenge their constituents so meaningfully that they redefine who and what that community becomes.

Sarasota County has committed to redefine its ethic to include the full spectrum of sustainability considerations. Through its comprehensive “Roadmap to Sustainability,” Sarasota County has begun to transform the identity of our citizenry and the composition of our economy, redefining the shared vision for our county.

## **Early Innovation: Responding to Local Challenges**

In 2002, residents expressed concern that Southwest Florida’s tremendous growth was straining natural resources. Sarasota County’s population had increased by more than 18 percent in just 10 years and was expected to grow another 14 percent in the next five years. Populations were increasingly moving into undeveloped lands threatening natural habitat and wildlife, straining drinking water resources, and adding to traffic, air quality and infrastructure pressures. In a proactive move to preserve the quality of life that had drawn so many to our area, a visionary board of commissioners responded to these challenges by establishing an Office of Sustainability. This office initiated internal operational changes as well as innovative community stewardship programs that established Sarasota County as a leader in sustainable local governance and inspired a new segment of the local economy.



## **Roadmap to Sustainability: Implementing Comprehensive Transformative Change**

In 2006, Sarasota County elevated sustainability to the highest organizational priority. It sharpened its focus to a systematic, holistic approach and drew a literal roadmap that pulled more than 100 previously fragmented initiatives into a cohesive strategy for lasting change.

The Roadmap to Sustainability details a tangible formula for encouraging both public and private sustainable operating practices. At the enterprise level, the Roadmap ensures that government walks the talk through environmentally preferable procurement, employee education programs, and the responsible exercise of regulatory authority.

The Roadmap also embraced multiple approaches that recognize previously unconsidered benefits of sustainability while balancing county policies with neighborhood priorities. Water quality initiatives, for example, combine conservation, pollution prevention and stormwater management with code enforcement and regulation. The forestry program measures its success not only in increased tree canopy, but also through improved air quality and lower energy costs.

The Roadmap also demonstrates how the web of sustainability extends beyond the natural environment to areas like transportation, public health and a diversified economy. It establishes sustainability at the core of all county operations and implements accountability at the highest level of management. Individuals at all levels are charged with pursuing sustainable solutions through their operational decisions and policy direction.

## **Measurable Outcomes: Milestones Along the Road to Sustainability**

Sarasota County has already adopted a new ethic reflecting the principles outlined in the Roadmap and is applying them in creative and innovative ways.



## Results at the Community Level

Through the development of partnerships, implementation of incentives, and public education about environmental opportunities, Sarasota County government has provided individuals and businesses with the tools necessary to make sustainable choices that will benefit the whole population. Sarasota County citizens have taken ownership of this ethic and have given it new life, resulting in:

- Reduced drinking water consumption per capita by 40 percent
- The preservation of 16,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land
- The extension of the landfill's 40-year life by 10 years due to recycling programs

Education and outreach has been a key component of this program's success. Sarasota County has organized workshops, festivals and conferences encouraging green building, low-impact development, energy savings, renewable energy, natural capitalism, and biomimicry. Other outreach programs include the Neighborhood Environmental Stewardship Team program that fosters youth involvement in watershed improvements in their own neighborhoods; the Sustainable Communities Workshop Series that annually brings national green building, health, and water quality experts to our community; and monthly sustainability networking meetings.

Sarasota County has set a particular focus on incentivizing green building and smart growth development practices, creating concrete benefits for developers willing to commit to certify their projects as green or to build pedestrian-friendly communities using smart growth principles. With fast track permits and reduced fees for green builders and developers, Sarasota County has encouraged broad adoption of energy and resource efficient building techniques and has helped to nurture a growing sector of the green economy. These policies have resulted in:

- Expedited permits for more than 1,300 dwelling units committed to green construction
- Nine proposed “green rezone” areas with up to 400,000 square feet of retail space

In addition, Sarasota County was one of 10 communities selected for a national workshop on Health Impact Assessments (HIA). The county's HIA program examines proposed development projects for their impact on public health concerns like physical inactivity and pedestrian safety.

Sarasota County’s success has drawn attention from local governments and institutions around the state and the country. More than 20 Florida local governments have requested information on the Roadmap and how to implement its various initiatives. The Roadmap also been shared with representatives from several state governments and at a Rocky Mountain Institute Sustainability Summit, with 40 of the nation’s top sustainability program leaders. For these efforts, The Alliance for Innovation recently presented Sarasota County’s Roadmap to Sustainability its award for Outstanding Achievement in Innovation.

#### Results in Government Operations

Within government operations, significant cost savings have been realized through energy and water efficiency measures and a greater employee awareness of their role in the enterprise’s use of resources. Sarasota County encourages proactive wellness programs at work, citizen choices for an active lifestyle, healthy buildings, new economic development, and food choices that support local farms while reducing energy needs. The results:

- First American county to sign the 2030 Challenge for carbon neutrality
- First Florida local government to gain LEED building certification
- Annual estimated reduction of 50,000 gallons of fossil fuels due to use of biodiesel blend
- Hybrid transit buses and hybrid pool vehicles, annually save more than 8,500 gallons of fuel



- Traffic signal retrofits resulted in an energy cost savings of nearly 70 percent
- Facility solid waste audits and increased recycling have saved more than \$34,000 per year
- More than half of Sarasota County employees pledged to install at least one compact fluorescent bulb in their homes, more than any other county that participated in the national ENERGY STAR Change a Light campaign to save energy

### **Lessons Learned and the Path Ahead**

Traveling this journey has made clear that growing communities throughout Florida and around the country share the same passion and enthusiasm for implementing sustainable solutions, but that actual direction is limited. Sarasota County has been a leader, but that means creating roads where none existed before. It means tearing down cultural and fiscal roadblocks, redefining the role of government in societal change, and engaging citizen and corporate participation through broad-based, creative and dynamic education efforts.

The initiatives currently being implemented, while producing significant results, represent only the first milestones along the road to a sustainable community. The Sarasota County Commission has committed to a full transformation of priorities and has established an accountability and incentive structure that will propel innovation and creativity both within government and the public at large.

*Additional information is available at: <http://www.scgov.net/Sustainability>.*