

Sarasota County is
On the road to
SustainAbility

- Connecting people with
 - people
 - economic opportunities
 - the environment
- Testing community priorities
- Integrating planning efforts
- Forming action teams
- Developing community partnerships
- Establishing guiding principles
- Promoting “**SustainAbility**”

It's all about choices
On the road to
SustainAbility
in Sarasota County



What is Sarasota County, as an organization and a community, doing to become sustainable?

SustainAbility is an elegant balancing act. The products we buy, the cars we drive, the places we choose to live and work and play, all impact our environment, along with our cumulative behavior in consuming and disposing of resources.

To leave a viable planet for future generations and create a place that is healthier both

economically and socially for today's generations, government and citizens alike must focus anew on how we impact the living planet in all we do.

The better we understand our complex ecosystems and how they influence people's social access and economic livelihoods, the better choices we will make as a society to practice and promote more sustainable ways of living.



Government as facilitator

- Sarasota County's Strategic Initiatives model embraces sustainAbility principles, focused on balancing environment, economic and social factors (the triple bottom line) to achieve the best overall community outcome.
- The Office of SustainAbility was established by resolution in 2002.
- Stretch goals were established by Sarasota County Commission, for 2004 and beyond.
 - To see us develop an understanding of the concept of "sustainAbility" as the focal point of community development and community building, opening our minds to the tremendous balances that must be achieved, undaunted by the task.
 - To see the big picture more often, recognizing that it is not today but tomorrow that we are influencing, that the good of the whole and tomorrow often outweigh the good of the individual and today. We will be judged by future generations on our ability to balance the equation.
- A Roadmap to SustainAbility was developed in 2006 as a comprehensive review of existing programs and policies as well as a strategy for moving us along the road toward greater community sustainAbility. Action teams are being developed to extend ownership more broadly through county government and the community.

Environmental impact

- We calculated the community's ecological footprint as a baseline, comparing what we as a community consume relative to our biocapacity (what the community – or planet – produces).
- Our Environmentally Sensitive Lands Protection Program has protected and maintained more than 16,000 acres of sensitive lands for public access and valuable habitat since its 1999 inception. In 2005 voters extended the program to include neighborhood parklands.
- The county's comprehensive approach to watershed management includes water conservation, as well as fertilizer and golf course maintenance ordinances.
- Solid waste management spans integrated waste reduction, reuse and recycling practices with a goal of zero waste sometime in the future.
- The county's environmentally preferable procurement policy guides our purchase of hybrid buses and vehicles, recycled content paper, least toxic janitorial products, ENERGY STAR-rated computers as well as high-performance building products and materials.
- Our Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) requires us to use the least toxic practical practices to control vegetative and insect nuisances.

Economic impact

- The county actively seeks partnerships with local businesses and agencies to explore new technologies. Examples include national debut of USDOE hydrogen curriculum at North Port High School; the Rothenbach Park Solar Complex partnership with Florida Power & Light; investigating the use of waste conversion into fertilizers, conversion of landfill gas into fuels, and others.
- Our Sustainable Sarasota Community Partnership is a monthly forum where businesses, organizations, government and citizens share responsibility, sustainAbility strategies, network, learn and create opportunities.
- The county's Green Business Partnership certification program recognizes local businesses and organizations that demonstrate environmental stewardship in their business, consumption and waste practices and make a concerted effort to reduce their environmental impacts.
- We partner with the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County and its Life and Environmental Sciences Cluster group in their focus on sustainAbility concepts including natural capitalism, biomimicry and business energy audits.

Social impact

- Community engagement is a key ingredient of successful sustainAbility programs. Sarasota County focuses on "an engaged and informed community" as one of its strategic outcomes. Our neighborhood grants and educational programs support grassroots efforts that improve the quality of life for residents and engage them in learning more about government.
- The county initiated Efest, a community festival that celebrates sustainable living. Local and national organizations and businesses showcase eco-friendly and sustainable products and services that build a green economy to serve the community. Now privately owned, the festival continues to encourage people to make 'best choices.'
- Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) designs its routes to enhance mobility for all area residents; at the same time the fleet is expanding toward a greater use of hybrid technology and less reliance on fossil fuels.
- Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence (SCOPE), a community-based nonprofit, measures our quality of life through an annual report card, engaging all sectors in the search for, and ownership of, challenges and related possibilities for addressing tough community issues.
- The Civility Code adopted by the Sarasota County Commission sets forth the expected nature of public discourse, accommodating and demanding respect for the diverse opinions that serve the democratic ideal of human dignity.

Built environment

- Sarasota 2050, a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, adopts smart-growth planning principles countywide. The plan combats urban sprawl by directing new growth into compact, walkable master-planned communities with the preservation of tens of thousands of acres of greenways and open space; it also focuses on revitalization of existing urban areas with new mixed-use land use forms.
- The county promotes and models high-performance "green" building design and construction – such as the Florida House Learning Center, Twin Lakes Park Green Office Complex and North Sarasota County Library. We also provide incentives to the private sector to build high-performance buildings and developments
- The county partners with USDOE/USEPA in the Rebuild America and ENERGY STAR programs to foster our commitment to energy management and conservation. We have created an Energy Management Action Plan to identify cost savings, ENERGY STAR benchmarked buildings, with hybrid vehicles, buses and biodiesel.
- Our County Commission accepted the Council of Mayors and AIA's 2030 Challenge for county buildings to become carbon neutral by 2030, requiring no fossil fuel energy to operate.